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"DO YOU REALLY LOVE ME, PAUL?" LUCETTE MURMURED, LOOKING UP AT HIM WITH TENDER LOVE-LIT EYES.

LUCETTE.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

THE ruby sun was setting, dropping down to rest behind the far-away hillsides. The sky in the West was a mass of gold and purple light, tinged with crimson—a dreadful lurid crimson, which threw a blood-red hue over the heavy, stormy clouds, that veiled the rest of the heavens like a canopy.

Down by the river all was dark and drear; there was none of the mellow twilight of balmy summer about this chill July evening. The cold wind sighed and moaned through the bullrushes, and stirred the lilies floating on the usually placid water with a rough touch. The gulls, flying in from the sea chattered and screamed, as though they feared some dread, unknown,

unseen catastrophe, and were warning one another.

The mournful cry of the moorhen rang out through the night. The brown fallen leaves, rustled and fluttered like restless spirits, eager to leave so weird a place. A dull sepia-coloured mist hung over the landscape, and no touch of light relieved it.

Even the slight figure of the young girl leaning against the old trysting-tree looked tintless. The dress she wore was sombre, and her dusky hair which floated out on the wind was in unison with the drear scene.

She had leant there long, regardless of the rapidly closing-in night and increasing chillness of the air; straining her eyes in the deepening gloom to catch the first glimpse of the man she loved so well. But she saw nothing, save the brown mists; heard naught but the discordant cries of the gulls as they wheeled overhead. And silent, bitter tears began to flow, coursing slowly down the pale cheeks; the little hands were strained nervously together, as though to keep

down some great pain, when suddenly a hand was on her shoulder and she was encircled by strong arms, while a deep musical voice whispered close to her ear,—

"My little love, are you weary of waiting?"

"Oh! Paul," sobbed the girl, "I thought you never, never would come, and this your last night here, the last time I shall see you for so long," and she twined her arms round his throat and hid her face on his shoulder.

"My own darling, I couldn't help it. Lady Earnshaw was not satisfied with the tinting of the face, and kept me touching and retouching it until dusk. Then I only escaped by promising to go to-morrow. Say you will forgive me, sweet. It was so good of you to come," he added, lifting the delicate flowerlike face and pressing his lips repeatedly to the pale, cold cheeks till they glowed under his ardent kisses.

"Forgive you! Oh, yes, dear Paul," she replied, nestling closer to him. "I am happy now you are with me. It was dreary, waiting here and thinking how soon I should lose you. Must

you go to-morrow? I shall be wretched without you."

"I must, *petite*, unfortunately. My future success depends in a great measure on Templeton. Were I now to refuse to go to him I should lose my chance; besides, many months have elapsed since I commenced those sketches for him. He is an odd fellow, not accustomed to have his wishes ungratified. He has written to me several times, and I have put him off repeatedly during the spring and summer, on the plea of finishing Lady Earnshaw's portrait, to stay near you; but now the time has come when he will no longer accept my excuses. I must leave you."

"Yes, Paul, I know you must go; I was foolish to think you could always stay with me," sighed the girl.

"It is only for a time, Lucette," he continued, sweeping back the thick veil of dusky hair from the pure, pale brow. "Two months will rapidly pass, and then I shall come back to you."

"You will come back—you won't forget me! In that great city you will see women far fairer than I. Oh! if you deceive me, Paul," she cried wildly, "I shall die. I couldn't live without your love."

"Yes, yes," he answered soothingly, "I will come back. Why should you doubt me, darling?"

"I ought not; but sometimes I think that you do not love me so intensely as I do you. It is my life. I only existed before I met you; my whole soul is wrapped up in you."

"Little doubter," he murmured fondly. "Can you accuse me of indifference?"

"Doubt that the stars are firm,
Doubt that the sun doth move,
Doubt truth to be a liar,
But never doubt I love!"

He managed to throw a great deal of expression into this speech, but an older and more experienced woman would have noticed that it lacked that absolute ring of tenderness which true and unselfish love can alone impart to the voice, no matter how loving the words may be. But poor Lucette, with her little span of seventeen years and no experience in the way of lovers, was satisfied for the time, and believed, as she wished to do, in the affection of this man, who was so dear to her.

"Now, *chérie*," he added, after a pause, which he had filled up by caressing the agitated girl, "I must take you home, or Nannette will scold me for keeping you out so late this chilly evening."

"Are you going to Sunnyside to-morrow?" she asked him presently, as they left the banks of the river and strolled towards La Malouette.

"No, her ladyship would not let me leave, so I was obliged to say that I would start later for London, and go over in the morning; but I must send an excuse, as Templeton expects me by the early train, and will meet me in town."

"Then shall I not see you to-morrow, Paul?—not even have one glimpse of your dear face!" sighed the girl.

"I fear not, dearest," he replied, lightly. "I shall be whirling away to the great metropolis while that little head is still pressing the pillow. But even were I to stay later," he continued, "I should not go to Sunnyside; I cannot please my patroness. I have portrayed the face of a young girl of twenty instead of that of an old woman of sixty, and still, she is far from satisfied."

"She surely is not sixty!" expostulated Lucette; "it is impossible. A woman of that age couldn't possibly retain so fine a complexion."

"My dear child," replied Paul Carr, with considerable irritation, "that fine complexion is nothing but rouge and pearl-powder. She is indebted for it solely to the perfumer; she is an utterly loathsome old woman; I wish I had not undertaken her portrait. It was with difficulty I used to keep my temper when she would sail up to the easel, and with her head on one side say, in an affected voice, 'The eyes, Mr. Carr, the eyes are not deep enough. We Letchmores were always celebrated for our azure-coloured orbs; and the cheek, Mr. Carr, the cheek might be a trifle more praiseworthy to be true to nature.'"

True to nature," he added savagely. "I should like to take a well-soaped flannel to scrub her parchment skin with, and then see where the peachiness would be."

"Paul, Paul, you should not speak of her like that!" cried Lucette. "She paid you well, and you cannot expect to make money without some trouble and annoyance."

"I know that, little one, but never was a hundred pounds more hardily earned. Dried up old mummy," he muttered, *sotto voce*, "making love to a man young enough to be her grandson."

"You will not go to her then, when you return to D—?"

"No, no, I shall try and keep out of her way. She will most probably be abroad in September. And now I think I will say good-bye here, as I know Nannette will not spare me for keeping you out so late, and I rather dread her tongue."

But even as he spoke a thrill scolding voice was heard, exclaiming in broken English,—

"Ah, Mr. Carr, vat you mean keeping my little cat out to his hour! Vat you mean, I say! and my little cat so *faible*, while at the still which led from the wood they had just traversed to the Malouette grounds, appeared an old woman in the high white cap and picturesque dress of a French peasant."

"I don't mean anything, Nannette," replied that individual rather tamely. "Lucette came to meet me at the old trying-tree, but as I was finishing Lady Earnshaw's portrait I was late. And she waited for me, like the little darling she is."

"You should not have been late," croaked old Nannette, only partly mollified by the grates bestowed on her nurling; "vy you stay," turning to Lucette, "ven you saw his mecessity, vy you not come home?"

"Oh! Nannette," sighed Lucette heavily, "don't scold me to-night, I could not but wait for him this last night. I shall not see him for so long," and a sob broke from the poor child, which the old woman melted, caressed her foster-child with tenderness, and even allowed Carr to enter the tiny mansion, of which Lucette was mistress, to say his adieux.

It was a pleasant room into which they passed from the garden—a room that showed the touch of a woman's hand, and that a Frenchwoman's too. Low, inviting little chairs were dotted about, and tiny tables burdened with tasty nick-nacks, and bowls and vases of summer blooms. Creamy roses, stately lilies, vividly-coloured geraniums, scarlet argents, with a background of dark, shiny leaves, and bouquets of violets and magnolias, which breathed that sweet perfume that never fails on the senses.

Dainty lace curtains draped the long windows, caught back by bands of embroidered Oriental silk, which also decorated the mantelpiece, with its load of fragile china and lovely glass. A magnificent bearskin was spread before the hearth, and another by the piano, which was a perfect work of art, with its *Sèvres* plaques and gold mouldings.

On the walls hung some exquisite sketches of scenery, framed by Paul, and presented by him to the young chateleine of the Malouette, and some jewelled china, said to have been saved from the Louvre at the time of the French Revolution. A pink-shaded lamp diffused a warm yet subdued light around, and altogether the contrast was extremely pleasant from the damp, chilly gloom outside.

"Set down and rest. You must be *fatigüé*," declared Nannette, forcing her mistress gently still firmly into an easy chair.

"No, I am not tired," expostulated Lucette.

"No matter. Set down," returned the nurse; "and I will go and make you some *chocolat*. A hot cup will do you much good, I am certain."

"Thanks, I should like some."

"And I also, if I may have it," chimed in Carr.

"Out," nodded the old woman, as she bustled out to the kitchen.

"What a faithful soul she is!" said the girl.

"She is, indeed," agreed her companion. "I can leave you in her care with a quiet mind."

"And Pierre, he is equally good."

"Yes, and Pierre," he assented again.

"What should I do," he went on a moment later, perching himself on the arm of the chair, in which Lucette sat, and passing his arm round her shoulders, "if you had not these faithful creatures to watch and tend you while I am away! I should be afraid to leave my treasure to ordinary servants during my enforced absences."

"Would you, really?" she queried, looking up at him with tender, love-lit eyes, radiant as twin stars.

"Of course I should," he answered, promptly, stooping his lips to hers and taking a long kiss. "Do you imagine I could have a moment's peace away from you if I thought you were not well cared for, and by one, too, who loves you as well as if she really were your mother!"

"Dear Paul," she murmured, "you do love me, then?"

"What a little doubter it is," he laughed, carelessly, tightening his clasp of the slender form, and smoothing the dusky-tressed head that rested on his breast with his disengaged hand. "Will you never believe that you are my liege-lady, la *puissante reine de mes sens*—my all in all, my dearest and best?"

"Really, am I? You mean this!" she asked, eagerly, delighted at his somewhat extravagant speech.

"Most certainly I do."

"And I shall always be first with you!"

"Of course, sweetheart."

"No one else will ever take my place in your affections!" she perched, with curious eagerness.

"No one," he returned gravely, quite meaning at that moment what he said, and giving not a thought to the future, which might alter his feelings with regard to her.

"I am so glad," she said, with a sigh of delight.

"And so am I," he laughed again, brushing her brow with his mounted lips, "and here comes Nannette with the *chocolat*," and he left his perch and seated himself decorously in a low chair near Lucette.

"Here, *ma m'selle*, your *chocolat*," said the old woman, handing her mistress a tiny *gros bleu* cup, and giving Carr another, "and some *brûlée*."

"Your cakes are delicious, Nannette," declared the young man.

"I am glad *m'sieu* likes them," she returned.

"I do indeed; I shall miss them up in town."

"*M'sieu* must hurry to come back."

"I shall do my best to return soon, you may be sure. In the meantime, Nannette, I leave in your charge my darling. You will take care of her."

"So I will, *sur mes paroles d'honneur*," almost shrieked the foster-mother, in her desire to convey to Paul the sense of her responsibility.

"That is well. Good-bye, *chérie*."

"Adieu, dear Paul," and the lovers stood clasped in each other's arms for a brief while, ere he took his last kiss from her quivering lips, and departed.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY the next morning Carr was on his way to London. The train whirled him swiftly past orchards and meadows, fields of waving golden grain, hills clothed with verdant foliage, streams winding like silver threads through the emerald grass, past picturesque villages and lovely landscapes that might well have charmed his artist eye. He, however, indulging in day-dreams, was oblivious of it all.

Ambitious, undoubtedly, was Paul Carr. He tried to think, and to a certain extent persuaded himself that it was solely on account of Lucette that he wished to succeed. Yet there was a great strain of vanity in him.

He longed to see his pictures on the walls of the Academy, to hear himself spoken of as a great artist, and to be courted and flattered by the highest in the land. Ambition with him was a stronger passion than any other. He was certainly fond of his *name*, but as

she had said, he did not love her as she loved him. Singularly handsome, and like most Irishmen, of a gay and generous temperament, he was an immense favourite with women, and had had several love affairs.

But he was incapable of very deep feeling, and like the swallows, loved but for a time.

Woe to the woman who gave her heart for aye into his careless keeping, and strove to chain that fickle, restless, changeable spirit to her side. His love for Lucette had lasted because no other woman at D— was fairer, or had pleased his fickle taste; besides, her innocence and devoted love for him were not without weight.

He had been accustomed to the women of London, Paris, Vienna, and other large cities; so this fresh, unsophisticated little French girl, with her charming accent, was a novelty, and he certainly cared for her more than he had ever cared for any other woman.

But would it last? This thought troubled him very little. He had promised to marry her on his return to D—; still, promises with him meant little or nothing, and in the meantime anything might happen.

As the train entered the station Carr saw Templeton waiting for him—a fair-haired, broad-shouldered, good-natured giant with a rent-roll of thousands, and a very decided leaning towards blue china, pictures, and old rubbish of all sorts. For women he cared little, and when urged on to matrimony by sundry mothers and fathers of marriageable daughters, he replied that he had never seen his ideal; when he did he should marry.

He was liberal in the extreme, and liked by everyone. His welcome to Carr was cordial and friendly; he had taken an immense fancy to the gay young Celt, and his delight at seeing him was genuine and loudly expressed. His face—round and red to an astonishing degree—beamed with pleasure, and he shook Paul's hand more often than was absolutely necessary, and with a grip that almost brought the tears to the latter's eyes.

When they were settled after dinner with huge cigars and the Englishman's beverage, brandy-and-soda, at Templeton's rooms in Gernian-street, he began unfolding his views to Paul on the subject of the landscapes he wanted him to take sketches of, some of which he had commenced nearly a year before.

"What on earth made you stay so long at D—?" he inquired, in his genial but rather inquisitive way. "I thought you only went down to avoid December in town, and there you have been away eight months!"

"Well, I found it enjoyable," replied Paul, slightly embarrassed. "The scenery down there is charming. I have made several sketches."

"And is really wasn't Lady Earnshaw?"

"Lady Earnshaw! Fought! Painted old crone. I never hated a woman so much in my life as I do that elderly fossil."

"Come, come, Carr," he laughed. "She isn't so bad as all that. I know several men who admire her very much, and think her fascinating in the extreme."

"I pity their taste," growled Paul.

"I hear Sunnydale is charming; but every place about there is picturesque. I remember a cottage called Les Maisonnets, the prettiest little house I have ever seen. An old French refugee, a Comte de Beaumont, lived there with his little daughter. I saw her one time. He was staying with Earnshaw about ten years ago. He went over to see the old man who was ill. The child was a strange, weird-looking little thing, with great, melancholy black eyes, and masses of curly hair. He died soon after. I wonder what became of the child, poor mite," added Templeton, tenderly.

But Paul, not caring to discuss the subject of Lucette with him, and lay himself open to the good-natured badinage of his host, remained silent, and Templeton, finding the conversation languishing, soon bade Carr adieu, and they separated for the night.

Time passed quickly. Paul was very busy. Every morning he worked away hard at his painting, and in the afternoon the two friends would lounge in the deserted parks or stroll

through Piccadilly to their club, where many familiar faces were missing, and the members few and far between, owing to the general exodus abroad, and to the country and seaside.

It was a pleasant life enough, and both found it so, only towards the end of August Templeton thought he would like a change from dusty London streets to green fields and cool dim woods; and entering Paul's studio, a fine room with side and top lights, and every convenience for painting, he prepared to sound his friend with regard to a trip to Scotland.

"Busy as usual," he said, genially.

"Yes, idleness won't win me fame or fortune."

"True. Am I in the way?"

"Not at all. I am always glad to see you in the studio. Your presence helps me, urges me on to greater efforts, consequently to better results."

"Now, my dear fellow, you are pulling my leg," laughed his host.

"I am not, I assure you," returned the other, gravely. "I do like to have you here."

"I shouldn't if I were painting."

"Possibly so, and there are few people I should care to have with me when I am working, as they would disturb and irritate me. You, however, have a contrary effect, so I don't mind you in the least; as I have before stated, I like to have you with me."

"That's all right, as I like to be here and watch the landscapes grow under your touch."

"What do you think of this?" asked Paul, indicating the picture on the easel by a flourish of his mahl-stick.

"I think it a little gem," answered Templeton, eyeing lovingly the canvass on which was depicted a sunset, a red sky, and a few tall poplars only, and yet so true to nature, so marvellously clever.

"You like it better than that?" pointing to its companion—Saurie.

"Yes, and than this!" taking up an old mill-house, painted which rippled a stream burdened with water-lilies.

"I don't like that at all," announced Carr, with extreme dissatisfaction.

"You don't seem to like anything you do."

"Very little."

"I believe you will never be satisfied with your own work."

"I don't believe I shall, or that I shall make a name while I keep to landscapes."

"You think portraits your strong point?"

"Yes. If I could get my ideal of loveliness, such a model as I have dreamt of, I know I could win fame," said the artist, dreamily.

"Yet, in the meantime, until you do meet with this superlatively lovely female, you will go on with these!"

"Of course."

"Quite right. Now, let me see; you have never been to Scotland, have you?"

"Wonderful to relate, I have not."

"You ought to go."

"Just so, old man. I ought to do no end of things that my purse won't stretch to."

"Well, what do you say to coming with me?"

"For what, my dear fellow? To let you spend your money in the most reckless fashion to procure me a pleasure I cannot obtain myself."

"For the twofold purpose of having a shot at the grouse and sketching certain bits of scenery," responded his host, passing over the latter part of his speech.

"You don't really want to go," objected Paul.

"You suggest this trip solely on my account."

"No, I don't," denied Templeton. "London is unbearable. I must go somehow for a little fresh air, and I am sure the mountains, lochs, and tarns of Scotland will inspire you to most noble efforts. I want sketches of several places and you know you belong to me, in a way, for the present, therefore you must come and do them for me."

"You are awfully good," said Paul, gratefully.

"I should like it above all things."

"That's settled, then," laughed the other,

delightedly. "When shall we start? Can you be ready to-morrow."

"No, that I can't," answered Paul, quickly.

"Why not?"

"Because I find I must go to D—for a few days," replied the young man, with considerable embarrassment.

"Go to D—!" exclaimed Templeton, in amazement.

"Yes."

"Oh, I see," he added, with a chuckle; "you want to bid a tender adieu to her ladyship."

"That's exactly it," agreed Carr, to put him on the wrong scent.

"Well, go, my boy, to your ancient chamber, and be as quick as you can over your furrows."

"Never fear. I'll start this evening, and be back by the end of the week."

"If madame will let you go."

"She won't be able to keep me against my will."

"I can quite believe that," laughed his friend.

The same evening Paul journeyed to D—, and surprised Lucette as she sat in a little arbour covered with honeysuckle, at the end of the garden.

"Paul, Paul, is it you, dearest?" she cried, as she sprang into his outstretched arms.

"Sure as it is," he answered, as he kissed her.

"And have you come to stay?" she asked, eagerly.

"No, dear child; I have not half done my work for Templeton yet. But we go to Scotland the end of this week, so I ran down to spend a couple of days with you," and he might have added, "and try to get a cheque from Lady Earnshaw."

"That will be delightful for you," she said, checking the sigh that rose to her lips.

"Yes, I darestay I shall enjoy it."

"How unfortunate!" she remarked, after a while; "Lady Earnshaw has invited me to dine with her to-morrow night. I suppose I must go."

"I think so."

"I shall lose an evening with you," she whispered, tenderly.

"We can't afford to do that," he replied, in the same tone.

"No, indeed."

"I have an idea."

"What is it?"

"I want to see her on a little matter of business, so I shall go over there to-morrow morning, and then most likely she will ask me too, and I can see you home."

"That will be delightful. Go by all means, and try your luck," and he did, and was welcomed warmly by her ladyship, who secretly adored the handsome young artist, and was quite ready to endow him with her hand and heart, and fortune, if he asked for it.

She begged him to dine with her, an invitation which he accepted with a readiness which filled her with pleasure, and she quite forgot, in the midst of her delight, that the dinner had originally been got up for a bluff, breezy, fox-hunting squire, who admired her immensely, pale and all, and who was as ready to take her to wife as she was to take the young artist to husband.

The dinner was a great success, and enjoyed by all save the afore-mentioned squire, who found himself left out in the cold on the re-appearance of the young lover, whose temporary absence had caused him to be taken into favour for a time.

Lucette was perfectly happy, too happy to notice how her hostess ogled Paul, and she more than enjoyed the walk home, and the tender adieu she had with her intended in her fatherly little room.

CHAPTER III.

The next day Paul returned to town, and the following one started for Edinburgh with his friend. After wandering through the Highlands they stopped at a town in the North.

There was a performance advertised at the Theatre Royal for that night. As they had been leading rather an uncivilised life, and had indulged in no dissipation during the past fortnight, Templeton suggested that they should go, and Carr agreed; saying that, of course, the acting would simply be execrable, as no decent actor would come to this remote Scotch town. And it seemed probable that they would be *ennuyés*.

The first piece was terribly dull, and had nothing good about it except its shortness, and the second promised to be little better until the last scene of the first act, when a woman came on the stage so lovely that she gladdened the heart of man to look at her, especially a man such as a slave to beauty as Paul Carr was.

Tall and graceful, her finely-moulded figure was shown to perfection in the soft, flowing white dress she wore. Masses of burnished golden hair were twisted in a coronet round her shapely head; her richly-tinted face was a delicate oval, her fresh red lips looked like twin cherries against the white dimpled chin.

The only flaw Paul's quick eye could detect in the perfect face was the expression, or rather the want of it, in the eyes. They were large, grey eyes fringed with dark lashes, but marred by a hard, soulless look. Still this woman was wondrously lovely, with a warm, glowing type of beauty that men could not but admire. Even the hard-headed Scots were won, and applauded every time she appeared.

Paul watched with delight, each movement charmed his artistic eye; there was such easy grace in every gesture of the white, rounded arms, every turn of the voluptuous figure. Her acting, too, was superb. Among the poor stick-like creatures who composed the rest of the company she shone like a bright star.

"That big, fair woman acts rather well," observed Templeton, after a time. "She's a rare devil though, I should think, with those hard, bold eyes."

He did not admire her very much, which was not astonishing, seeing that he was big and fair himself.

Strangely enough, big men generally admire wee little women, and Templeton had often been heard to say that he thought one pair of brown eyes were worth a dozen blue, possibly because his own were of the latter colour.

"Her face is perfection!" retorted Paul, hotly.

His friend's words jarred on him; he had noticed the defect himself, but did not like the idea of its being so palpable as to attract the notice of a man so indifferent to women and their appearance generally as Templeton was.

This woman fascinated him strangely, he drank in every word she uttered greedily, and never took his eyes off her till the curtain fell for the last time. Then rising and leaving the box immediately he made his way, as fast as the crush, which was great, would allow, to the actor's entrance.

But with all his haste some time elapsed before he reached it, and when he did the door-keeper informed him that Madame Isabeau (he had learnt her name from the playbill) had left. And nothing more could he wring out of the canny Scot, although he alternately cursed and coaxed him, and offered him money to any amount.

At last he rejoined his friend, who was patiently waiting for him smoking a huge cigar, and whose quiet jests did not at all improve his temper. The next day he again repaired to the theatre, only to find to his intense disgust, that there would be no performance for several nights; that the company who played the evening before had left early in the morning, and very little more could be learnt.

The man even after receiving gold could give but scant information about Madame Isabeau. She had come with the company a few days before, had played three nights, and left that morning with the rest; beyond that he knew—nothing.

It was in vain that Paul wandered up and down the town, prosecuting his search in the most likely and unlikely places, making in-

quiries of everyone whom he thought would know anything about this lovely woman who had made so deep an impression on him. He, however, could not get the faintest clue, so after two days spent in a fruitless search he reluctantly left to return to England with Templeton, who declared he would remain no longer in that wretched little town.

October saw them again at Germain-street, but a strange unrest possessed Carr; he could settle down to nothing serious, and spent most of his time in making sketches from memory of that glorious head. Soon his studio was littered with drawings of the same subject in all positions. But none pleased him save one, which he worked at hard and coloured exquisitely. It was a wonderful likeness; even Templeton expressed surprise at it. It represented so faithfully the lovely face in all respects save one—the eyes in the picture had a soft, tender expression, which added wonderfully to the beauty of the face, and gave a charm which the original did not possess.

And Lucette—was she forgotten all this time? No. He had thought of her, and her loving letters came like a reproach to him; though she said nothing in them of that sort.

He feared to return to D—, dreading, lest the great love she bore him might make her senses keener, and he hated to be reproached. But as the winter came on she wrote, and begged him to come to her, and he promised to do so, reluctantly enough, and having little wish to meet her.

But let us retrace our steps, and return to Lucette. The time hung heavily on her hands after her lover left. She missed the ringing, musical tones of his voice, the tender caresses he lavished on her so freely. She would wander for hours down by the river, where they had often met listlessly plucking the wild flowers that grew among the sedge grass, or floating in the old canoe, which was moored to the bank; accompanied only by June, a large Russian wolf-hound, given her by Lady Earnshaw, and who was devotedly attached to her.

Here she would read his letters again and again, trying to persuade herself that they really were tender, loving compositions, but failing to derive much real comfort from the light, indifferent words.

And as the weeks passed, and September gave way to October, the loving little heart sickened with longing.

His letters had latterly been shorter and surter; he said nothing about returning to D—, and the girl began to droop and pine, to the intense indignation of Nannette, who indulged in sundry tirades against Carr.

But only to old Pierre she would not for the world have uttered one word against Paul before Lucette. She loved her foster-child too well to pain her by abusing the man she adored in her heart.

Indeed, Nannette's affection for Lucette was unbounded; she had been more than a mother to her. The Marquise de Bascompiere had not lived long after they left their native land. Though too good and amiable a woman to add to her husband's troubles by repining openly, she nevertheless felt the change in their fortunes terribly, and in secret pined and yearned for the blue, sunny skies of "la belle France."

The Marquis chose the Maisonette because it was built in the French style, and situated in the South of England.

It was a charming little retreat, and as far as his limited means allowed he decorated and fitted it up with that exquisite taste which is the chief attribute of the Gaul.

But his efforts were in vain. Before many months elapsed Rosalie de Bascompiere died; and he, broken-hearted and disappointed, survived her but a few years.

Thus, at the early age of ten, the little Lucette was left an orphan to the care of Nannette, who discharged the duty that devolved on her faithfully, and would have given her life willingly to save Lucette from pain or trouble.

For some years her life glided on uneventfully, but not unhappily. She painted with some skill,

and passed part of her time sketching bits of the lovely scenery which surrounded her abode.

Like most Frenchwomen she embroidered beautifully, and many were the charming pieces of work which adorned the tiny drawing-room of the Maisonette.

Calm and peaceful, if she had no great pleasures she knew not sorrow, and well would it have been for her had her life remained ever thus.

But Lady Earnshaw, while staying in the neighbourhood, saw Sunnyside, the magnificent seat of Sir Henry Morton (who had ruined himself horse-racing).

As it was for sale she purchased it, and spent a considerable portion of the year there. Discovering that Lucette was the daughter of her old friend, the Marquise de Bascompiere, she immediately visited the girl, and seeing how lovely she was frequently had her to stay at Sunnyside, which was only two miles from the Maisonette, and there it was that she first saw Paul Carr.

He, bored to a great extent by the society of Lady Earnshaw and some other titled dowagers who were staying with her, hailed with delight the advent of the naive, unsophisticated little French girl.

Lucette was less trammelled by conventionalities than a girl brought up under the careful eye of a mother would have been, and gave way to all her impulses without reflection.

Her present impulse was decidedly to fall in love with this handsome artist that chance threw in her way.

She had seen but few men, and those few were of a rough, countryfied, commonplace type; so for her Paul Carr's deep blue eyes, perfect face, and winning manners had an irresistible charm. He at first flattered to pass the time, but when he saw how entirely and devotedly she loved him he was touched, and grew at last to return her affection to a certain extent, and nearly a year passed in unbroken happiness for Lucette.

But perfect happiness never lasts long in this world, and she had seen her lover depart with an aching heart and strange misgivings with—the feeling that never again would she experience that full, satisfying joy, that rare pleasure and contentment, which had been hers during those glorious summer months.

The winter snows covered the earth like a thick white carpet ere Paul returned to D—. He dreaded meeting this girl who loved him so well. He feared she would detect the change in his manner, for now his whole mind was filled with one thought, his soul devoured by a great longing to see once more that wondrously beautiful woman who had crossed his path like a shooting-star, and disappeared.

Nothing was more irritating to his vain, shallow nature than censure, yet he need not have feared. Love they say is blind, and it really seemed so in this case. Lucette uttered no word of reproach, only showed unqualified delight at his return. The wan cheeks gained once more a tender, delicate glow, like the pink tinge of a sea-shell, the large black eyes wore a look of peace, and health and strength seemed to be returning to the delicate frame.

Going back to the old life and the quiet at D—were not without a beneficial influence on Paul. Here nothing reminded him of the fair stranger, and by degrees he came to look on that episode as a bright dream, and to think of the lovely face as a vision of wondrous beauty that would serve him as a model for his pictures, but which he would never see again, and which would never be tangible.

Convinced of this, he let his thoughts return to Lucette and the old tenderness revived. She was so clinging and tender, the girl's fresh, true love flattered his vanity. All the wealth of her pure young heart had gone out to him, and though he could not and did not understand such affection as hers, still he felt in a dim sort of way that he would be a heartless scoundrel to leave her.

Thus thinking he went to her one night. She sat on a low couch by the fire, daintily clad in a soft white dress, richly trimmed with creamy lace; the luxuriant hair was twisted in a Grecian

knot low down on her neck, and rare old jewels gleamed amid the dusky coils.

There was no occasion to dress in this way, as visitors were rare at the Maisonette, but it pleased his fastidious taste to see her looking like some fair picture. She therefore always wore rich and rather out-of-dresses.

Lucette looked very lovely. The firelight threw a warm glow over the delicate little face; she appeared less fragile than usual, but the small white hand held out in welcome trembled in his, and her cheek flushed hotly under his light caress.

"Charming, as usual, *chérie*!" he said, jestingly, "you grow prettier every day."

"Do you really think so, Paul?" she cried, eagerly, raising her star-like eyes to his. "I am so glad."

"Indeed I do," he replied, "I shall have the *chicest* little wife in the world."

Her cheeks flushed crimson at this, and the heavy lids drooped over the shy eyes, while her heart beat tumultuously with joy. This was the first time he had alluded to her being his wife since his return to D—.

"But I have come to talk on serious subjects," he continued, throwing his arm round her and drawing her close to him. "Will you listen, love?"

"Indeed, yes," murmured Lucette. "I will listen to anything you wish to say."

"And do you really love me, little one?" pressing his lips to the soft wavy hair.

"Yes, yes, Paul, you know I do," cried the girl, twining her arms round his throat, "with my whole heart and soul. You are the light of my life, without you it would be worthless, I could not live. Say that you believe I love you," she added, with passionate intensity.

"I believe, child," he said, soothingly, patting the blooming cheek, in tempting juxtaposition to his own.

"Never doubt me," she continued, entreatingly, "never let the thought enter your mind that you are anything save most dear, most necessary to me, my all in all."

"Sweetheart, I shall not want or wish to," he whispered; "I want to believe that you are all mine—every thought, every wish. You see I am exacting."

"You cannot be too exacting to please me."

"Very well then, I shall become a perfect tyrant; remember you have given me permission and must not object to anything I do, say, or propose."

"I am not likely to," she answered, with loving humility.

"You had better not, madame, or my just wrath will be terrific."

"I don't think I shall be very much afraid of your wrath," with a glance up at the handsome face and sunny blue eyes.

"You ought to be."

"Perfect love casteth out fear."

"And you mean to say yours is perfect, *chérie*?"

"I hope and believe so."

"Then you must promise entire obedience to my slightest wish."

"I will readily do that. To obey you will be my greatest pleasure."

"Then you will come to me soon, be my own little wife, darling!"

And Lucette, her whole soul filled with rapturous joy, whispered "Yes," and hid her blushing face on his shoulder.

"I am not going to wait long," he announced, after awhile.

"No!" she murmured, shyly.

"No," he echoed. "Spring is the time for marriage, when the flowers are springing, and the trees budding and the birds mating:—"

"In the spring a young man's fancy
Lightly turns to thoughts of love."

Tennyson knew what he was about when he wrote those lines."

"Yes."

"So in a fortnight or three weeks I shall expect you to be—"

"So soon, Paul?" she interrupted.

"Soon, madame! Where is the obedience to my wishes you lately promised!" he demanded, jestingly. "And don't you want to come to me?" he added, putting his hand under the soft dimpled chin, and lifting her face so that he could look down in the dusky eyes.

"Oh, yes," with another deeper blush, that crimsoned even the shell-like ears and delicate throat.

"Then why this objection to a speedy union?"

"My things have to be prepared—my trousseau."

"Ah!" he laughed, "what a queer thing it is that you women can't do anything without first buying a dozen new gowns and bonnets, with *fa-la-las* to match."

"I must have some new things," she expostulated. "I want to look nice in your eyes."

"Dear little woman," giving a kiss for the tender flattery. "Well, in a month then. That will surely give you ample time to buy all the frills and furbelows you want."

"Yes, I can manage to be ready by the end of next month."

"That is settled definitely!"

"Yes."

"Nannette will help you."

"Of course, and—and—Paul—"

"Well, dear?" enquiringly.

"I—I—think I—ought—to tell—"

"Who?"

"Lady Earnshaw."

"Oh!" the young man made a wry face. Fifty pounds was still owing for the portrait; her ladyship might not be inclined to pay it speedily if she knew he was going to be married, and the sum would come in very nicely to defray the expenses of the wedding trip.

"Don't you think I ought to tell her?" repeated his fiancée, regarding him with anxious eyes.

"Is it absolutely necessary to tell her before we are married?" he asked, rather moodily.

"I think so. She will be terribly offended if I don't."

"We mustn't offend her."

"No, she has been so kind to me, and having been such an old friend of my mother's I feel that I ought not to keep anything of this sort from her."

"Very well, tell her. You had better go and see her. A visit to Sunnyside will be better than a letter."

"Much better. Will you come with me?"

"No, my dear child," he answered hastily. "Go by yourself. Your confidences will come more gracefully if I am not there."

"Perhaps you are right."

"I think so. And don't let her persuade you to perpetrate any extravagances in the way of wedding-gowns. It will be better for you to be married in your travelling dress, not in all the finery of snowy satin and orange-blossoms," he said, as he kissed his adieu.

"Yes, Paul," she agreed obediently, yet feeling rather disappointed, for what woman does not dream of her bridal robe, and wish to look charming on her wedding-day?

CHAPTER IV.

LOVE, love, love! Everywhere throughout the sun-brightened landscape, on the next morning, as Lucette walked over to Lady Earnshaw's place—love. The sunbeams seemed to be weaving cobweb-like nets to fling over the flowers, and prison them, hold them, while they caressed them.

The voice of the mavis thrilled out on the soft air of a song of rapture to his mate at the coming of summer; high up in the pines the wood-pigeons cooed amorously; the mellow notes of the blackbird poured forth; and in a thicket, dense and gloomy, where the sun-god's bright rays could not penetrate, sang a recently and early-arrived nightingale, trilling out a flood of glorious melody. Bushy-tailed squirrels were bounding about from branch to branch; timid rabbits peeped from the undergrowth; bright-winged jays flew in couples overhead.

Even the balmy air seemed full of tender whispers, breathing love, amorous ecstasy; and Lucette thought so, as she moved slowly through the wood, amidst the old, old lichen-covered boles, and soft, yielding mosses; a new light in her dark eyes, a warm flush on her creamy cheek, a little smile hovering on pretty lips.

Paul loved her! She was to be his wife! A vision of wondrous happiness floated before her eyes, a dream of perfect content and future bliss in union with her surroundings.

The still wood, still save for the voices of the feathered choristers, the glittering river, seen like a sheet of silver through a vista of trees, and a picturesque old mill beyond; and all around, the opening buds of spring flowers, tufts of pale, faint primroses; clusters of violets, breathing a perfume that never palls on the senses; bluebells; stitchwort, with its star-like flower; and daffodils, that come "before the swallows dare."

It was all so lovely that she was loth to leave the enchanted spot, and would have lingered, only she knew she must see her friend that morning.

Lady Earnshaw was in her boudoir, a tasty little chamber with pale blue hangings, and a profusion of silver ornamentation.

"Well, my dear!" she said, after a while spent in tridling conversation, "what do you want to tell me? I see you have some news."

"Yes, I—have," faltered Lucette, shyly.

"Tell me, then, what is it?"

"I am going—to—be—married," she jerked out desperately.

"Married! You!" ejaculated her ladyship, raising her gold eyeglasses, and regarding her intently.

"Yes."

"And who is the happy man, pray?"

"Mr. Carr."

"Who!" almost shrieked the old woman, losing her self-possession for a moment, in her astonishment, and turning pale even under her rouge.

"Mr. Carr," repeated Lucette, timidly.

"You don't mean that," gasped her ladyship. "You can't."

"I do—indeed. Don't—don't—you—approve of—my choice?" she faltered, astonished at the other's manner.

"Approve! Oh, yes, yes, of course," returned her hostess, grasping the situation, and realising the necessity of controlling her feelings, and keeping her secret from the young girl. "I could not do otherwise—a most attractive man. Handsome, accomplished, and will one day no doubt be famous."

"I hope so," cried Lucette, recovering her spirits at this praise of her lover. "He is so very, very clever. He must succeed, must make a name for himself."

"No doubt he will," said Lady Earnshaw slowly, and with no small effort, for the news had been a terrible shock to her. "You are a lucky girl to have won his affections."

"I think I am," said the fiancée with due humility.

"And—when will—you be married?"

"The end of next month."

"So soon?"

"Yes, Paul wishes it then."

"Ah!" the faded beauty, with her dim blue eyes and rouged cheeks felt there was no hope for her, and that she would have to take back into favour her breezy, loud-voiced squire, with a view to making him a partner for life.

"Not much time for preparing your trousseau."

"Very little."

"You will want my help, I suppose?"

"If you will kindly give it me."

"Of course," returned her ladyship, readily, for though a vain woman, at bottom she was generous and kind-hearted. "You must come up to town with me for two or three days, and my own particular dressmaker shall manufacture the bridal robe."

"You—are—extremely kind," faltered Lucette, "but Paul wishes me to be married in—my travelling gown."

"A fig for Paul, then," cried her hostess, with a snap of the fingers. "Men have no business to

interest in such matters." The idea of a young thing like you being wedded to anything but white satin and orange blossoms! You will do just as I please in the matter of the trousseau, or I wash my hands of the whole affair, and leave you to Nannette's country-fair taste and style. Now choose. Will you be guided by me or Paul?"

And Lucette, remembering her lover had said they must not offend the wealthy, imperious woman gave in, and let her have her own way, and a busy, expensive way it was.

The week in London was spent at milliners and dressmakers, and heaps of things were purchased that were quite useless to Lucette, but as Lady Earnshaw insisted on paying for most of them that did not much matter.

In the midst of her preparations for her *protégée* she found time to send for and receive her elderly admirer, and also to let him know that if he pressed his suit he would receive a favourable answer—which he did, and Lady Earnshaw appeared at the wedding an engaged woman.

Sweet and pure Lucette looked, in her white bridal robes, with orange blossoms crowning the dark shapely head, and cold and indifferent must have been the man who would not have admired her.

When the ceremony was over Paul put his arm round the trembling girl, and kissing her cool, fresh lips, whispered words of soft endearment in her ear. Through the warm, mellow sunshine they drove back to the Maisonette. Paul would have preferred going straight from the church to the quiet place, where they intended spending their honeymoon, but Nannette showed so much chagrin when she heard he did not intend to return for the "*letto d'alcova*" as she termed it, which she had prepared, and Lady Earnshaw was so obstinate about the white dress, that he was obliged to alter his plans, at which Lucette was delighted.

She had been uneasy at the idea of being married in a dark dress, thinking it would be a bad omen. So Paul let Lady Earnshaw and the old nurse settle it as they wished.

After a brief sojourn at a quiet seaside village they returned to the charming little mansion, of which, by right of his marriage, Paul Carr was master. For the first few months Lucette was happy. Her husband, though careless and sometimes absent, was never unkind; he was not so much with her as she would have wished. Ambition which his fondness for her displaced, was now resuming its old sway, and he spent much of his time in his studio. She rarely entered the room, which he devoted to painting; in truth, she was rather jealous of his art, and fancied he loved it as well as he did her. However, he always joined her in the evenings, and she was contented until the autumn following her marriage.

Business took him to London, he said for a week, but the week had come to an end long ago, and still he returned not. His letters were curt in the extreme, and through them ran a strain of strange unrest, which she could not understand. An intangible dread possessed her of coming evil; and her doubts and fears were increased, on entering his studio one day to arrange some drawings Nannette had displaced in a portfolio, to find several sketches of the head of a very beautiful woman, one of which was coloured exquisitely.

It fascinated her! Again and again she went back to look at the wonderful face. She felt intuitively that her husband had not flattered the original, and that it was a true likeness. She longed to know all about this fair woman. A terrible fear took possession of her soul that he might love this woman more than he did her, and she grew sad and pale with anxiety, as the days lengthened into weeks, and yet—he came not!

At last after three months he returned, pale haggard, and worn, and for a time Lucette forgot her jealous fears, and thought of nothing but his altered looks. She tenderly ministered to all his wants; but he declared he required nothing but rest, as he had been working too hard in town.

The sole explanation he gave his wife of his long absence was that he had been sketching for

Templeton. By degrees it dawned on the girl that there was a terrible change in her husband. At first it was indefinable—there was a something wanting, but she couldn't tell what.

Then as time passed on she noticed he rarely caressed her, that he spoke curtly, and sometimes even harshly. He seldom joined her of an evening, and when he did his manner was odd and pre-occupied.

Slowly she realized that her husband's love had slipped away from her. Why, she knew not. She had ever been patient, loving, obedient; and intense was the anguish she felt at the loss of the only thing she prized on earth.

She tried at first to win him back; wearing the dresses he had admired, twining her rich tresses in the fanciful, classic way he had been wont to praise; but it was useless. He never noticed her attire; when he looked at her his eyes wore a dull, wistful aspect; he did not seem to see her, but to be looking beyond into space.

The fond, tender heart wearied for love. Lucette began to droop; this secret grief was sapping her young life.

But Paul Carr noticed it not; his whole soul was again occupied with but one thing—an intense desire to see again the woman who had fascinated him so strangely.

A few days after his arrival in town Templeton had strolled into his rooms, and with a great cigar had settled down for a comfortable chat.

"By-the-by," he observed, after awhile, "I saw a lady friend of yours the other day."

"Indeed; who?" said Paul, indifferently.

"That big, fair woman we saw act in Scotland."

"When—where?" broke in Carr, impetuously.

"About three weeks ago at the English Opera."

"Did you speak to her?"

"Spoke to her, my dear fellow. What are you thinking about?" replied Templeton, amusedly. "I don't speak to people of that sort in public."

"What do you mean by 'people of that sort'?" cried his friend, hotly.

"Well," said Templeton, deliberately, "actresses."

"I should have spoken to her."

"I hardly think so."

"Why?"

"She had the *gay* De Casagno with her. He possibly might have objected."

"I know Casagno, and should have asked him to introduce me. Did you ask him who she was?" he continued, eagerly.

"No," replied Templeton. "I went to see him a day or two after, but he had started on a cruise to the Mediterranean, so I learnt nothing of the fair lady. You seem to be terribly hard hit!"

"Do you think so?" answered Paul, with well-assumed indifference. "I was thinking what a fine model she would make."

"Yes, for this picture you are to have in the Academy next season. You must paint something out of the common to create a *furor*."

And then the conversation turned on art.

After that Paul could not tear himself away from London. Nightly he haunted the opera and the theatres, but without avail. Amongst all the beautiful women who thronged the boxes and stalls he never saw the face he searched for so eagerly. And at last, wearied and worn out, he returned to D—scarcely out the idea Templeton had suggested, of introducing the beautiful unknown into his picture.

All through the dreary winter months he worked away unceasingly. The picture was life-size, and represented a woman in a soft, flowing Greek dress, reclining on a heap of tiger skins and crimson shawls, holding in her hand a lily. It was perfectly painted.

The gold-embroidery of the dress looked as though it had just left the hands of the embroiderer, while the lily was natural, it seemed only to have fallen there from careless fingers. The tinting of the glorious face was lifelike, and Templeton, whom Carr had invited down to D—to give his opinion on the subject, was loud

in his praises, and declared that it would be the picture of the season.

That large and genial individual was intensely astonished to find his gay, careless friend married, and, above all, married to de Bascompierre's little dusky-haired daughter.

He pitied Lucette.

He had been but a very short time at the Maisonette when he saw that Carr cared little for his wife; while her deep devotion could not but be patent to all eyes.

It gave him a strange sharp pain at his heart, to see the look of wistful entreaty in her great, sad eyes, when she looked at her husband, and Paul's utter indifference to it and to her caresses.

One day she came into the studio and saw, for the first time, the picture. She timidly asked who the lady was.

"Don't know," replied Carr, curtly. "Only saw her once."

"Have you painted this from memory, then?" ventured his wife, hesitatingly.

"Yes."

"She must have made a deep impression on your mind!"

"She did," replied Paul, cruelly. "She was the most beautiful woman I have ever seen!" After a pause he remarked, "You seem to be very inquisitive. It is a woman's worst vice! Pray conquer it, if you can."

His voice was cutting and sarcastic in the extreme, and the harsh words wounded Lucette deeply.

She turned and hastily left the room, bitter tears she could not repress coursing down the pale cheeks.

The anguish of her tortured heart was unbearable.

She fled out of the house to avoid meeting Nannette, whose great love for her nursing made her keen to detect anything wrong.

Wandering to the river she flung herself down on its sedge banks, and sobbed as though her heart would break.

CHAPTER V.

It was a terribly hot day; the sun burnt fiercely from out the cloudless sky; there was hardly a breath of wind to stir the leaves, or cool the air. It was an unheard-of sort of day for May.

Never within the memory of man, had such heat visited England so early in the year.

London was unbearable, and yet everyone was in town; it was the height of the season.

The Academy was crowded that sultry May afternoon. There was great display of talent on the walls; but the picture that attracted most attention, and received the greatest praise, was one by a young unknown artist, called "*A Memory*."

The crowd round it was dense, and a tall, elegant woman, accompanied by a dark, foreign-looking man, seemed weary of waiting to get a glimpse of this famous painting.

"I shall not wait any longer, Julia," she was saying in a peculiarly sweet, low voice; "it is useless; these people will never have done studying it."

"Can you wonder," replied her companion, gallantly, "when the subject is your fair self?"

"Ah! that is nonsense! How can a man I do not know have painted my face? It must be a chance likeness!" exclaimed the lady, potently.

"It is no chance likeness, but a faithful rendering of every line and curve of your charming features. Now," he added, quickly, "the crowd is thinning; judge for yourself if I speak truly or not."

The lady stepped closer, and an exclamation of astonishment escaped her lips, as the crowd parted and she had a full view of the picture.

She saw, indeed, that it was a wonderful likeness; the clear, peachy complexion, the curving red lips, the great, grey eyes, her crowning glory of golden hair, and a hundred minor details, were represented as unerringly as if she had sat for several times.

"I cannot understand it!" she says, after a

long pause, during which she had never taken her eyes off the picture. "A man who does not know me!"

"He calls it a memory," observed her companion; "possibly he has seen you, and, like many others, having lost his heart irrevocably, this is the result."

"Ah, flatterer!" murmured the lady, turning to him with a charming smile. "But you know this young artist; did you not tell me so?"

"Out, puissance reine de mon cœur."

"I must know him. Will you see him soon?"

"Yes, to-night. He is in town," replied De Cassagnac.

"Then bring him with you to my reception."

"To hear is but to obey. Let me see you to your brougham, and then au revoir," said the Frenchman, bowing. The lady took his proffered arm and together they left the Academy.

Late that afternoon Paul received a note from Cassagnac. It ran as follows:—

"DEAR CARR.—Will you come with me to-night to Madame Lavallier's! She is a very charming woman, and extremely anxious to know the painter of 'A Memory.' I shall be at the Opera this evening, so if you will meet me there we can drive down together."

Paul wondered who Madame Lavallier was, and for one brief moment it flashed through his brain that she might be the fair unknown, but he dismissed the idea at once as improbable. He had not been long in town, but already his ambitious wishes had been fulfilled to the utmost extent. He was courted and flattered by all, and had more commissions to paint portraits than he could possibly execute.

His great success, however, brought him but little happiness. Something was wanting—he longed unceasingly for the sight of that face he had seen but once. His greatest pleasure was to go to the Academy and gaze for hours at his picture.

Wearied of the ceaseless gales of the season, he was listlessly penning a note to Cassagnac refusing the invitation, when he suddenly remembered that he was the man Templeton had seen at the Opera with Madame Imbosc, so he determined to go; if only to ask him about the fair unknown.

When they left the Opera, and were driving to Arlington-square, he asked Cassagnac when he returned to England.

"Only two days ago," he replied. "I have been yachting in the Mediterranean with Madame Lavallier's party."

"And who is this Madame Lavallier?" inquired Paul, indifferently.

"Who? Why surely you know!" ejaculated Cassagnac.

"I don't, indeed, or I should not ask you. Who is she?"

"Why, the original of your picture."

Paul started violently, and then asked, eagerly,—

"The lady who was with you at the English Opera last autumn?"

"Yes. Where did you see her? I can't understand how you managed to paint that portrait. She has only been in England about a month during the last five years."

"I saw her two years ago," replied Paul, quietly, "acting at a wretched little provincial theatre in Scotland."

"Ah," laughed the Frenchman, "I heard about that—one of her mad freaks. She was staying at L—, and hearing that the actress who was to take the principal part was ill, she went down to the manager to say that she would take the part for the three nights the company remained there; and she did, and the man never made so much money before or since."

"But who was she?" asked Paul.

"Ten years ago she was the cleverest actress at the 'Francaise.' My cousin, Rene Lavallier, saw her, and being very wealthy and his own master, he married her, as he was hopelessly in love. Three years after he died, leaving her his money, which she spends right royally. And here we are," he added, as the brougham stopped at the door of a brilliantly-lighted house.

Paul followed Cassagnac with a wildly beating

heart, and, after nearly two years, gazed once more on the wondrous face of this woman. She received him very graciously, and murmured something complimentary about his picture. At supper, as he sat beside her, the heavy perfume from her rich lace seemed to exercise some subtle influence over him. His brain reeled, he felt mad—mad with love for this queerly, imperial woman.

He lingered long after the other guests left, telling his lovely hostess how he had first seen her, and she was nothing loth to listen. He was wonderfully handsome, this *débonnaire*, blue-eyed artist, and she felt he must admire her greatly.

Day after day Paul Carr was with Madame Lavallier. He worshipped her with a wild, blind idolatry, and could not pass a single day without seeing her.

One evening, at a reception at her house, he had not been able to speak to her; she appeared to avoid him, and had allowed her attention to be engrossed by Cassagnac and others. When they had all left he stood beside her at the open window. It was a glorious June night. The bright moon shone like a lamp in the sky, tinting everything with a silvery whiteness, and resting on the fair face of the beautiful woman beside him.

She looked like a marble statue—a masterpiece of sculptor's art. He felt he must know then if she cared for him or not.

"Do you know I love you!" he said, passing his arm, unproved, round her waist; "love you far, far more than life itself. Tell me, I must know—do you return it?"

He held her tightly strained to his heart; she raised her head, and her eyes dwelt on his fair, handsome face.

"Answer," he whispered, passionately.

She twined her fair arms round his throat as she murmured,—

"Only too well!—their lips met in a long, clinging kiss."

Alas! for poor Lucette.

Through the long winter months she despaired and pined for the love that would never more be hers. Always fragile, the secret grief was eating away her heart, sapping the fair young life of all joy and happiness. She was weary, listless, and weak, and prayed for death as the only thing that could release her from the torture of unrequited affection.

Templeton often came to the Malsonnette. His whole soul revolted against Carr for the way in which he treated his wife; but he would not quarrel with his *ex-débutant* friend, though he despised him, as he knew his society was some consolation to the poor deserted child.

She looked for his coming eagerly, as he always brought news of her husband. He never spoke save in praise of him, saying how hard he was working, what fame and renown he was gaining, yet it pained him keenly to note how she drank in every word about the worthless man she loved so dearly, and how indifferent she was to all other topics.

He brought her books, flowers, music, and tried by every means in his power to waken the dull, listless soul to interest in general things, but in vain! She grew day by day more fragile, more sad; and when glorious May drew near its close he saw that she could not live, and would die with the June lilies, and terrible was his rage against the man who had so wantonly wrecked and crushed this fair young life.

The mellow, golden light of the summer sun peeped in through the windows of the room where Lucette lay, and lit up the wan, wasted face with an unearthly radiance.

The great dark eyes were closed; the long black lashes resting on the hollow cheeks made their waxen pallor more intense. Her breath came in quick, short gasps, and it was evident to the watchers that she could not last long.

Suddenly the heavy lids lifted, the wistful eyes gazed round the room, searching for a face that was not there. She murmured,—

"Paul, Paul! come to me."

It was the first time she had mentioned his name for days. Nannette sent to Paul's rooms in town to tell him of his wife's illness, but he was seldom there; she thought, probably, he had not received the letter.

She could not believe him so callous, so heartless as to refuse to come to Lucette, and she fell unto death. Now that she had heard her darling's cry of anguish she grew desperate, and implored her husband to go to London and bring Paul back to the dying girl.

It was late in the day when Pierre started—night when he reached the great metropolis. Carr was not at his studio; there Pierre was told he had gone to his club. Thither he proceeded, only to be again disappointed. At last he traced him to a large house in a fashionable part. Lights gleamed from the windows, strains of music and sounds of revelry floated out on the still night air. The servants refused to admit the queer-looking old Frenchman, but he, frantic at the delay that had already occurred, burst through them, and entering the supper-room, where Paul sat beside a wondrously beautiful woman in a wine-coloured dress, with jewelled gold bands gleaming on her white throat and fair round arms—stood before him. For a moment he quailed under the old man's fierce glance, but recovering himself instantly he asked, in a complacent way, what he wanted.

"La petite is dying!" said Pierre, hoarsely.

"Dying!" sneered Paul; "I suppose she has a cold, and you magnify it into serious illness."

"No. She not see to-morrow's sun set. Veel you come!"

"No," he muttered, between his teeth; "I won't encourage these ridiculous fancies. Say I will come when it suits me!"

"Will you not go, Paul?" said the lady, in her sweet tones. She knew nothing of his marriage, and thought some sick friend, or brother-artist, had sent for him.

"I cannot leave you, *ma chérie*," replied the young man passionately, gazing fondly at the lovely woman beside him. "The rest of my life, every moment of it, must be passed with you, or it will be worthless to me!"

And Pierre, hearing the passionate words, and seeing the look which accompanied them, knew it was useless to stay and plead; wearily he turned away, and retraced his steps.

The cold grey light of early dawn stole through the shuttered windows of the Malsonnette, when he arrived there. Lucette's eyes were closed, her face looked so still and white he thought she was dead.

But the knowledge that he had returned, and the longing to see the man she loved so well, who might be with him, seemed to draw the fleeing soul back to earth.

She murmured "Paul," then seeing Pierre alone, she cried in tones of piercing anguish, "He will not come to me," and with one long, deep-drawn sigh, her head fell back on Nannette's shoulder, and her weary troubled spirit passed away to him who gave it.

They laid her to rest under the shade of a drooping willow, up there in God's acre, where the blue violets blossom, and all is calm and peaceful. A plain marble cross marked the spot, with simply "Lucette" on it.

The evening after the funeral a man stood in the gloaming by the newly-made grave, gazing down where all he loved lay buried. Now that she was dead Templeton realised how dear this child-woman had been to him.

Could she have become his wife he would have cared for and cherished her with all the strong affection of his honest heart. Fate had willed it otherwise, and he knew that the rest of his life would be drear and empty, that for him there would be no more sunshine in the world; and he turned and went out into the darkness of the gathering mist, praying that he might meet her some day, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

[THE END.]

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NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOURS.

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When Mrs. Chatterton, a very pretty young widow, with one little boy, bought a small cottage at B—, and came there to reside, she thought it an earthly paradise; but Satan entered in paradise, and the very first day that little Roland Chatterton went out to play, a great dog jumped the hedge which divided his mother's garden from her neighbour's, and barked and growled most terribly at the small man in petticoats and red stockings, who at once flew to his mother with piteous wails and shrieks of terror.

Mrs. Chatterton caressed her child, placed him in safety in the middle of her bed, and rushed out into the garden, armed with a curtain-pole, to expel the intruder. He was there still, and had frightened the little servant, in a white cap, who was called Roland's nursemaid, to such a degree that she had climbed a vine trellis, and clung to it half way up, crying piteously. Meanwhile, a man of portly habit, and so well dressed that, but for his disgusting conduct, Mrs. Chatterton would have considered him a gentleman, stood on the other side of the hedge, laughing.

"All he wants to do is to lick your hand, young woman," this masculine individual was saying. "He's the best-tempered fellow. Come down and be friends with him."

"I can't, sir!" squealed the little maid. "I'm that afraid, I shall die, sir! I had a cousin died of hydrophobia, sir! O-o-h! Oh! He's a climbing up after me!"

Mrs. Chatterton, though mortally afraid of the dog herself, was determined not to quail before these insolent intruders. She advanced slowly.

"Call your dog away, sir," she said. "The brute has already nearly frightened my son into convulsions. Now he attacks my servants. No doubt I shall be the next victim. Call him off!"

"Here, Leo!" cried the gentleman. Leo heard, and obeyed reluctantly.

"Come down, child," said Mrs. Chatterton. "It is most shocking that we should have this to bear. Is that your dog, sir?"

"That is my dearest friend, Leo," replied the portly gentleman; "and allow me to tell you, madam, that he is worth any ten men, and all the women I have ever had the misfortune to meet. The young person is quite safe. Why doesn't she come down?"

Mrs. Chatterton, conscious that the dignity of the situation was not increased by the great exhibition of stocking which Sophy was making, repeated her commands. The maid descended, and rushed into the house, entering a wild shriek; and Mrs. Chatterton turned to the dog's master.

"Sir," she said, "as I cannot permit my only son's life to be perpetually in danger, I must request you never to allow that dog to enter my garden again."

"I'll request him not to do so," replied the gentleman. "He's partial to a bit of fun, enough. He's like me in that. It is his sense of the ridiculous, I am sure, that brings him here. If you will climb trees when he appears, he may think it too good a joke to lose. He may insist on coming."

"A dog who would behave like that would prove himself mad," replied Mrs. Chatterton. "I am quite as averse to hydrophobia as Sophy is. I shall think it my duty to shoot him if he trespasses on my grounds again."

Mrs. Chatterton did not own a pistol, and could not have fired one if she had, but the threat enraged the stout gentleman.

"Perhaps you would like to shoot me also?" he said. "Observe, madam, I am on my own grounds, not on yours. I have my own opinion of any one who can take a dislike to a noble animal like that, who can repulse his offers of affection. I begin to doubt the creature's sagacity. Generally he makes no mistakes. Why he should make advances to a cowardly little silk-top of a boy and a drivelling idiot of a maid-

servant I am sure I can't guess. Come, Leo. Madam, I advise you to take your family to Dr. Pasteur as soon as possible. Good morning."

"The insolent wretch!" gasped Mrs. Chatterton.

"Oh! ain't he, mum?" gasped Sophy, at the door.

"I'd a mind to scouse him with b'iling water!" called cook, from the kitchen window. "Oh! but he's the devil, that's what he is—had luck to him!"

The individual thus described was not yet too far away to overhear, and he grinned sardonically.

People said of Mr. Sutphen that he had been jilted in his youth, and had hated women ever since. Certainly they were right about the women. He could see no good in any of them, and when they offended him he behaved most horribly, as in this present instance.

And this was a nice beginning for two neighbours, especially for Mrs. Chatterton, who had never before been treated with any discourtesy, and who was used to look upon men as her natural protectors and admirers.

It gave her a new sensation, and a most unpleasant one, to be addressed in that fashion, to be looked at as Mr. Sutphen had looked at her.

Then she had called her son, her baby yet in petticoats, a cowardly milk-sop! Considering the exhibition of stockings she did not feel much sympathy for Sophy; still he had behaved like a brute to the girl.

She longed to punish him, and she could not see her way to it. However, she had a gate opened into the other road, that she might not always be obliged to pass his windows in going out.

From this time the widow and the bachelor lived in a state of warfare only possible to country neighbours. There was always a cow or a chicken, a goose or a turkey, to quarrel over.

The bachelor had his washing and ironing done at home by his servant, who tied his clothes-line to the branch of an old tree which grew on Mrs. Chatterton's side of the dividing hedge.

Mrs. Chatterton waited until all the shirts and stockings were hung up, and then bade Sophy untie the rope.

Sophy cut it, and all the garments lay upon the ground. Mr. Sutphen consulted a lawyer, and Mrs. Chatterton had a bill for "clothes-line, and damage to garments" presented to her, which she paid.

It was only one of a thousand annoyances, and this went on for a full year at least; everybody in the village knew about it, and everybody blamed the old bachelor; but, curiously enough, a great attachment had sprung up between the original cause of the quarrel—the great Newfoundland dog, Prince Leo, and the widow's little boy, Roland, who had now got into knickerbockers, and had his long curls cut.

The heads of the opposing armies should have interfered, but they did not. They pretended not to know anything about it.

There was a deep pond, almost a lake, hard by the little cluster of cottages of which Mrs. Chatterton's was one, and Roland had been forbidden to go near it alone.

Alas! when his hair was cropped and his skirts put away the baby vanished for ever. Roly became a boy. And he not only went to the lake alone, but went there to paddle about in the water. One day he was misused.

Sophy had lingered at her glass awhile in view of the arrival of the young butcher. A great terror seized upon the mother. She flew towards the pond.

As he saw her coming naughty Roland ran further into the water and lost his footing. He was drowning—drowning before her eyes. She could not swim, but rushed in after him, shrieking loudly.

Instantly a man rushed across the sand. A dog passed him, and flew into the water.

Mr. Sutphen was the man, Prince Leo the dog. The former brought out the lady, the latter the little boy.

But for their promptitude both would have

been drowned, and as soon as Mrs. Chatterton felt sure they were not, she knelt down at Leo's side and kissed him on his good brown nose.

"You dear thing, I love you," said she; "and you, sir, my eternal gratitude is yours."

After this peace reigned between the cottagers. Offerings of roses from the gentleman, and of custards from the lady, brought on calls and tea-drinkings—of course, at Mrs. Chatterton's house. And one day, while they sat opposite each other, with Roly between them, and Prince Leo at his master's feet, Mr. Sutphen remarked:—

"This is very nice. I should like to be so always."

Mrs. Chatterton blushed.

"Should you?" he asked. "I'll be very good to Roland. I love him dearly."

"And I'll be very good to Prince Leo," she said, "and—to you."

So it was settled.

THY LAST FAREWELL.

It lingers on the murm'ring forest trees,
Wish rise and swell,
And leaves its quivering sighs upon the breeze,
That last farewell.

Across the greenward where the daisies raise
Their starry eyes,
And gold and purple in the sunset blaze
All silent lies.

The tender cadence floats on unseen wing
With mournful spell,
And evermore a thousand echoes ring
Thy last farewell!

Ah! never more the dewy grass will bend
Beneath thy feet,
Nor golden morning with thy tresses blend
In mingling sweet.

And never will the leafy hollows part
Their whispering boughs
To welcome thee when day's bright beams depart,
And evening glows.

No longer will the wooded echoes wake
To hear again
Thy voice, which, ringing through the glades,
Did break
In wild bird's strain.

And other feet will press the wavy grass
Where sunshine glows,
And other forms along the green wood pass,
Crowded with wild rose.

And other voices on the western gale
Will softly play,
Along the silent hill, and up the vale,
While far away

Thou wilt be wandering in distant lands,
And years will roll,
While dimly, it may be, this fair time stands
On memory's scroll;

And greener paths stretch out before thy view,
And shadows fair,
In robes all radiant with the rainbow hue,
Sail through the air.

Yet ever more these winsome scenes to me
Of sadness tell,
And waving trees and flowers still echo silently
Thy last farewell.

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AVICE FOLEY'S ORDEAL.

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CHAPTER II.

"I'm afraid you find life here rather quiet, my dear," said Lady Lyngard, one morning, about three weeks later, as she sat in her boudoir with her young companion. "You hardly calculated on such an utterly monotonous existence, did you?"

"It is an existence I would not change for any other!" was Maraquita's quick response. "I do not care for excitement—I hate the very sound of the word!"

Lady Lyngard looked at her a little curiously—sentences like these sometimes set her wondering, and speculating on what Miss Leigh's former experiences could have been; but the girl never spoke of them in any direct form, and she was herself too true a gentlewoman, both by instinct and breeding, to attempt to force a confidence not voluntarily given.

Maraquita would have been very happy in her new life at Lyngard Court but for one thing—the terror of living under a false name, and the fear lest her whereabouts should be discovered by her father, and she should be forced to return to him—for she knew very little of the law, and imagined he had the right to compel her to remain under his roof until she reached the age of twenty-one. Otherwise she would have been utterly content.

She was treated with the greatest kindness by Lady Lyngard. Avice Foley had conceived for her a violent fancy, which resulted in a sincere friendship between the two girls. The days went by in a placid calm, that contrasted with the turbulent unrest of her Parisian experiences—seemed in itself bliss; and her duties were so light that she had ample time to devote to reading or whatever other amusement she might choose. What more was there left to wish for!

In her heart she rather dreaded the return of the master of the house, who, in some inexplicable manner, she was inclined to dislike—perhaps because she fancied when he did come her own liberty and freedom of action would be considerably curtailed, and the quiet domestic life she had led with Lady Lyngard put an end to for ever. Not so Lady Lyngard herself, whose one trouble was her nephew's continued absence.

"I'm rather afraid he never will settle down," she said, pursuing her own train of thought. For the last ten years he has been travelling about like a wandering Jew, and when men have grown accustomed to such a nomadic existence they seldom change it."

"But what made him take to it?" asked Maraquita.

"A great sorrow!" Lady Lyngard answered; but she did not say what it was, and presently the young girl left her, and went downstairs to the conservatory for the purpose of gathering flowers, it being one of her tasks to fill the vases.

As she came back she paused in the hall, and stood looking out on the January sunlight flooding the park with its pale glory, and shining down on the crocuses and snowdrops—those first-born children of the young year, that were blossoming out their fragile lives in the stone vases on the terrace. The grave, young companion's face relaxed, and a smile of exquisite thankfulness curved her lips as she thought of in what pleasant places her lines had fallen. Oh! if it would only continue, this most welcome repose!

"I actually know what happiness is once again!" she said to herself, unconscious of how lovely she looked, standing there with the dark carving of the door enfaming her, and the basket of flowers she held in her hand lending the vivid scarlet camellia and japonica to a picture that was, in every attribute, perfect.

Suddenly she started violently, and took a pace backwards.

Coming up the marble steps of the terrace was a tall man, with dark, eager eyes, that she instantly recognised—none other, in fact, than the one at the sight of whom Paul Chevasse had

manifested such terror on Christmas Eve, and who he had afterwards followed.

She made a great effort to recover her self-possession, and succeeded; but ere before he had noticed the effect his presence had produced on her, and wondered at it as a thing for which he could in nowise account.

Raising his hat in acknowledgment of her presence, he paused in front of the door, and she, by some process of intuitive reasoning, concluded he must be a stranger come to look over the house—for Lyngard Court was the show place of the neighbourhood, and people flocked from miles round for the sake of its antique carving and gallery of old masters.

"Did you wish to see the pictures?" she asked, and a faint smile dawned on his lips at the question.

"If you will be good enough to show them to me," he answered, coming in, and glancing round the wide, lofty hall, with its skins of animals mounted on scarlet cloth, and the various trophies of the chase adorning the walls.

Maraquita hesitated a moment. There was no servant visible to whom she could yield the guidance of the visitor, and it would hardly do to leave him while she went in search of one, so the only way of solving the difficulty was to act as cicerone herself. This she accordingly did, leading the way upstairs, and pointing out, as she went the various objects of interest—for already she had made herself thoroughly acquainted with the interior of the house, and knew as much of its contents as the housekeeper herself. The gentleman did not seem in any way struck by what he saw, and shrugged his shoulders half cynically as he stood in front of a picture that was supposed to be a genuine Murillo and the gem of the collection.

"The owner of this place is away, is he not?" he said, turning to her, where she stood in front of a stained glass window, whose jewelled colours fell upon her in a cloud of misty, sun-flecked glory. "Pity Fortune should have made him master of what he so little appreciates. Don't you think so?"

"It is not my province to pronounce judgment on Sir Piers Lyngard!" she answered, a little stiffly. "Doubtless he knows his own affairs best, and is more capable of forming an opinion than a stranger would be!"

"I accept the rebuke," he said, putting up his hand to stroke his moustache. "I was only repeating what people might say. Perhaps Sir Piers has a valid reason for absencing himself."

"Perhaps."

"Do you know if this is so?" he went on, apparently unmindful of the annoyed colour his persistency had called to her cheeks.

"I do not; and if I did I certainly should not be any the more inclined to satisfy idle curiosity!" she answered, sharply, and led the way downstairs, wondering all the while what could have taken place between him and her father to exercise on the latter so powerful an effect as she had witnessed.

"I suppose you mean me to go now!" he said, pausing in the hall, and smiling in a peculiar manner. "Well, I thank you for your kindness in conducting me through the house. I assure you I have viewed it under quite a novel aspect, and certainly never saw so many beauties to admire before."

Maraquita started—struck by a sudden idea, that, although she dismissed it as absurd, was yet sufficient to make her feel hot and uncomfortable.

"Then this is not your first visit?" she faltered.

"By no means! I have been here many times, as I dare say, Benson will testify"—turning to the old butler, who was just crossing the hall, and who paused, transfixed with astonishment. "He will also tell you who I am, and save me the embarrassment of mentioning my own name."

He was laughing now, apparently enjoying her mystification, while the butler came forward, gleefully rubbing his withered hands together and bowing.

"It is a joyful surprise to see you back again, Sir Piers—a sight good for old eyes!" he exclaimed,

in tones that quivered a little. "Have you come to stay with us at last, sir?"

"For a time, at any rate, Benson," replied his master, shaking hands with him; then, turning to Maraquita, who was scarlet with ashamed vexation, he continued, in a lower tone, "Are you angry with me—do you think I have taken an unfair advantage over you?"

"Yes," she answered, truthfully, with no effort to disguise her resentment.

"I am very sorry. I will make all apologies you may demand!" coming a step nearer, and speaking very eagerly. "I suppose I ought not to have kept you in ignorance of who I was, but I really could not resist the temptation. Won't you forgive me?" entreatingly.

"As I told you before, I have no right to dictate your conduct, Sir Piers," she said, coldly, and moving away.

"Then you have no right to withhold absolution for a sin confessed," he added, following. "It is impossible for you to judge of how strong the temptation was, otherwise you would be less hard-hearted. You won't be friends?" as he held out his hand, which she pretended not to see. "Well, I must leave it to time to obtain my pardon since you are so obdurate!"

CHAPTER III.

"I THINK," said Miss Avice Foley to herself, as she stood in front of her looking glass, and contemplated with much satisfaction the image it gave back; "I think I shall do."

After this candid expression of opinion she tripped lightly downstairs into the drawing-room, where her mother, a handsome, dark-eyed woman, with a stately manner that could on occasion become extremely haughty, was sitting in front of the fire, screening her face from the flame with a fan of peacock feathers.

"Six o'clock," said Avice, kneeling down beside her, and glancing at the timepiece. "Lady Lyngard and May will be here directly, I should think."

"May!" repeated her mother, in some displeasure. "How extremely familiar you have become with that young person. Avice, it is really hardly discreet of you."

"Wait until you've seen her, mamma, and then if you manage to resist her charm, and fail to love her, you are—well, harder-hearted than the generality of people. You can't think how delighted I am to have found such a friend!"

"I fancy my pet has rather a liking for new faces!" said Mrs. Foley, bending down to kiss her. "See how highly you have grown to think of Dr. Lascelles!"

There was something the matter with Avice's shoe—a buckle that required to be tightened, and perhaps it was the exertion of doing it that brought such a vivid red to her cheeks as she looked up again.

"Dr. Lascelles is so clever—you know you think so yourself!" she said, rather apologetically.

"Most decidedly he is clever, or I should never have allowed him to attend to that wound on your neck, which he has treated very successfully. However, now that it is all right, there is no necessity for him to continue his visits, and after to-night I do not think he had better come again."

Avice was silent for awhile, and gazed thoughtfully into the glow of the fire, as if she might there find a clue to the problems perplexing her.

It was now nearly a month since that evening when she had first met Dr. Lascelles, and in the interval she had seen him nearly every day—not purposely, excepting, indeed, when he called at the Manor in his capacity of physician, but often in her walks in the village, whither she went two or three afternoons a week, carrying a basket filled with good things for the old women, and looking like a modern Santa Claus, dressed up in the nineteenth-century costume.

On these occasions it had seemed the most natural thing in the world for him to relieve her of her basket, and accompany her to the gates of

her home, as his own lay in the same direction; and speedily an intimacy sprang up between them, and they spoke to each other with the candour and unreserve of people whose interests are identical.

He told her of the book he was writing which was to make him famous, and confer lasting benefit on the medical profession, and she, listening, thought how clever he was and looked up at him with a world of admiration in her tender blue eyes—eyes that were, in good truth, sweet enough to glance away any man's heart.

She was always sympathetic, always ready with encouragement, buoyant hopes of the future, and prophecies of all that was to be achieved in it; and gradually some of her enthusiasm communicated itself to him, and the weary look of spent energy that had formerly saddened his face gave place to the eagerness of a man who, seeing before him some great object in life, strains every nerve in order to attain it.

Avicé had not invariably mentioned these recollections to her mother. She did not wish to be deceitful, but some instinct warned her that Mrs. Foley would have been far from pleased at the knowledge—would perhaps have forbidden her to go into the village at all; and then—how lonely it would be for the young doctor, who had positively no one, save herself, to talk to, and obtain sympathy from.

It will be seen that Avicé's sophistry, in this instance, took the same bent as his inclinations.

"You know Sir Piers has returned," said Mrs. Foley, breaking in on her meditations, from which she only roused herself with an effort.

"Yes! Is he coming here to-night?"

"I believe, so—I hope so!" her mother responded, thinking to herself that fortune had been kind in sending the baronet back at this opportune moment, just when Avicé was looking her brightest and best—for it had been a dream of hers these three years past to see her daughter mistress of Lyngard Court; and surely she was fair and winsome enough to gain his master's heart!

"Dr. Lascelles!" announced a footman, in gentlemanly tones, throwing the door open to admit the new tenant of the "Wilderness," who looked singularly handsome in his evening dress—so, at least, Avicé thought. Immediately afterwards the party from Lyngard Court entered, Maraquita standing behind Lady Lyngard, with the sort of proud humanity her manner usually exhibited when outside the immediate home circle; for she was keenly alive to the anomaly of her position, and ultra-sensitive lest she might be suspected of attempting to presume upon it.

"Mamma, I am so glad you and May will know each other at last!" exclaimed Avicé, drawing the young girl forward; and Mrs. Foley, looking up, saw before her a tall, slim figure, clad in a cheap black lace dress, and with only a bunch of scarlet geraniums at the throat by way of ornament—a girl of beauty so striking that it was no wonder she stood for a moment speechless, staring at her almost as if she had been a ghost, or some image of a bygone past.

As she was acknowledging the introduction, dinner was announced, and they all adjourned to the other room. Sir Piers and Lascelles giving their arms to the two matrons, and the young girls following together.

To an onlooker that dinner party would have seemed one of those pretty, home pictures the eyes delight to dwell on. The table, with its snowy damask, glittering silver, cut glass, and delicate flowers; Avicé and Maraquita, each representing a different, but equally attractive type of beauty; the two older ladies with the gleaming light of diamonds and sapphires flashing in their auring and lovely Sir Piers; and Lascelles—both men in their respective ways remarkable—all combining to make a picture in which every element seemed harmony.

When the ladies had retired to the drawing-room Mrs. Foley made room for Maraquita on the couch beside her, and said to her:

"Come and sit near the fire," she said; "it struck me at dinner you looked rather cold."

Maraquita smilingly denied the imputation, but nevertheless obeyed the request, and was so

placed that her face caught the full light of the lamp while that of her hostess was in shadow.

"Perhaps you have been accustomed to a warmer climate than this," went on the elder lady, speaking in a far more gracious tone than was her wont to her social inferiors. "You came from France, I believe?"

"Yes."

"But you had been in England before?"

"Not for many years."

"Still you are English!" persisted Mrs. Foley.

"I think so—oh! yes, of course I am!" she responded, rather confusedly, and growing vividly red as she spoke.

"I often thought of sending Avicé to school in Bruxelles, in order to perfect her French. I suppose they speak the language as well there as in Paris?"

"I don't know. I never was in Bruxelles."

"Or Paris?"

"Yes"—after a perceptible pause, "I have been in Paris, but not to school."

"Ah! I thought you were educated there."

"No—I was educated in Normandy."

"And Avicé tells me you are an orphan," said Mrs. Foley, taking her hand with an air of almost affectionate sympathy. "Do you remember much of your parents, or did they die in your infancy?"

"My mother died when I was in the convent, and I recollect hardly anything of her; my father—he hesitated, growing pale, and at a loss how to continue.

She was saved the trouble of deciding, for at that minute Sir Piers Lyngard and Doctor Lascelles entered the room, and the former immediately crossed over, and took up his position on the hearth-rug, opposite his hostess.

"Mrs. Foley, I have made a discovery," he said, smiling at his eyes met hers. "Shall I tell you, or keep it to myself?"

"Give me the benefit of it, by all means," she responded, graciously; "discoveries were certainly not intended to remain the sole property of their originator."

"Then you shall have it. I find there exists a most striking likeness between you and Miss Leigh."

"Nonsense!" she exclaimed, sharply, and with an uneasy laugh. "What can possibly have put such an idea in your head?"

"Nothing save the fact itself. I appeal to you, Mrs. Foley, and Doctor Lascelles to corroborate my statement."

They both looked round from the book of engravings they were turning over, and studied the two faces on the couch. Yes, there could be no denying the truth of Sir Piers's assertion, for the resemblance, as they sat together, was undoubtedly striking.

There were the same level brows, the same dark eyes, and straight, delicately chiselled nose—the only feature presenting a marked dissimilarity was the mouth, for while the young girl's lips were full and sensitively curved, Mrs. Foley's were extremely thin, and had something of merciless determination in their close clasp.

"How strange that I never noticed it before!" exclaimed Avicé. "Why, mamma, May is much more like you than I am!"

"That she very easily might be, seeing you are the image of your father!" retorted Mrs. Foley, apparently far from pleased at the remark. "Miss Leigh and I have the same coloured hair and eyes, but that is all. Come," she added, rising, as if to put an end to the discussion, "let us have some music. Do you play, Miss Leigh?"

"A little."

"The invariable young lady formula!" laughed Sir Piers, going to the piano and opening it; "it may mean so much or so little. I wonder," he added, in a low tone, as Maraquita took her seat—"what interpretation will be placed upon it in this instance?"

She did not answer, but sang a little pathetic German "Volkslied" in a sweet, full contralto, that had evidently been carefully trained, and was announced as a peal of silver bells.

"You hide your light under a bushel," he ob-

served, as she finished; "I did not know you could sing."

"I do not see how you could be expected to know it," she answered, coldly, and with the curious reserve that was always in her voice when she spoke to him.

"Why not?"

"Because I am a stranger to you."

"Not quite," he said, leaning his elbow on the top of the piano, and standing in such a position as to prevent her leaving the music stool. "I came home nearly a week ago, and have seen you every day—although, to do you justice, you have tried as much as possible to avoid me. I suppose you have not forgiven the little ruse I practised upon you. Is that it?"

She turned over the leaves of some songs she had taken up, and did not reply, while he, looking down on her, found himself wondering at the length and beauty of the lashes lying on her richly-tinted cheeks.

"Besides," he continued, "the term 'strangers' is a relative one; some people may be acquainted for years, and yet deserve it, while others, after a couple of days' introduction, know each other as well as if their whole lives had been spent almost together. There is such a thing as instinctive sympathy, remember."

"And instinctive antipathy!"

"Assuredly. Do you mean to infer such is your present state of mind with regard to myself?"

He put the question laughingly, and bent his head to look into her eyes while awaiting the answer.

"Would it not be rude to declare it, even if it were true?" she responded, with a glance of demure mischief that Avicé herself might have given.

"Perhaps so, according to the world's code—for which I don't care one little bit!"

"Pray give us another song, Miss Leigh!" put in Mrs. Foley's voice, at this juncture—she had been watching the *tête-à-tête* at the piano, and thought it quite time it should be put an end to. Maraquita complied, not altogether sorry for the interruption, seeing that she had been betrayed into a certain familiarity of tone with Sir Piers, which was the very last thing she desired.

As a matter of fact, there were two elements at work within her when she was speaking to him—the one born of her pride, which in the past had been so terribly humiliated that it made her shrink from a man's notice as a thing to be dreaded, lest it should turn to insult, and the other a subtle attraction that she did her best to struggle against, and which lent to her manner a chilling hauteur that would have repelled a good many men, but which rather served to fascinate him by reason of its novelty.

She had been so accustomed to the society of men to whom the word "woman" meant only an amusement for their leisure hours, a distraction from the cares of business, perhaps—at best, a toy to be played with; and then cast aside, that it was small wonder she had lost all faith in chivalry, or that she should draw back from admiration, however delicately it might be expressed. Besides this, and underlying it all, was the consciousness of her secret—a consciousness that seemed to have weighed on her more heavily since the baronet's return than it had done before.

As she finished her song, Mrs. Foley came up, and laid her hand on her shoulder.

"I have been asking, and have obtained permission for you to stay here the night," she observed, in her most winning tones; "Avicé talks of skating to-morrow, and will be delighted to have you for a companion."

"You are very kind," said the young girl, rather surprised at this display of friendliness from one who had been held up to her as the very incarnation of haughty exclusiveness; "but Lady Lyngard—"

"You need not think of Lady Lyngard—she and I have arranged everything satisfactorily," was the smiling retort—"all you have to do is to yield a passive acquiescence to plans already made."

And so it was decided she should remain until the next day, and Sir Piers and Lady Lyngard

took leave, and drove off with Dr. Lascelles, who they would drop on their way. After their departure, Aviee said,—

"May will sleep with me to-night, mother."

"She will do nothing of the sort," replied Mrs. Foley, composedly; "I have had a fire lighted in the white room; and I certainly shouldn't think of running the risk of letting you two girls get together, and sit up talking half the night, as, of course, you would do if you had the opportunity."

Aviee pouted, but experience had taught her the futility of attempting to battle against her mother's will, even when that mother was an indulgent one, so she said nothing, and Mrs. Foley, who insisted on Maraquita having some wine to neutralise the effect of a strange bed, and make her sleep, went to a side table, on which was a silver tray, holding decanters. She poured out a glass of sherry, and then, glancing round to make sure she was unobserved, dropped in a very small quantity of dark coloured liquid out of a bottle she took from her pocket, after which she handed the wine to her guest.

As it happened, however, Maraquita did not drink it, for while Mrs. Foley had gone to the door to speak to the butler, Aviee, in the act of reaching across the table, turned the glass over, and spilled its contents, and Maraquita, who really did not wish for the wine, forbade her replenishing them. Soon afterwards she was conducted upstairs to a large, low room, at the end of a gallery, in which a fire was burning, and throwing ruddy gleams on the white walls and drapery that had given it its name.

"You are not afraid of ghosts, are you?" queried Aviee, who had come with her.

"No. I can't understand being afraid of what doesn't exist"—laughing.

"Oh! So you don't believe in them? That's a good thing, because"—a spool of mischief in her tone—"this room has the reputation of being haunted, and I was going to offer to come and sleep with you."

"But your mother forbade you!"

"As to that, I could easily slip in, and she would never know anything about it," said this audacious young ignoror of the Fifth Commandment.

However, Maraquita received the suggestion, and Aviee, rather piqued, said good-night, and left her. Her first action, when she was alone, was to go to the door for the purpose of securing it—a purpose frustrated by the fact of there being no key in the lock.

"I don't suppose burglars will come in, or, at any rate, if they do, they won't molest me," she said to herself, with a smile, as she undressed herself and got into bed, her thoughts dwelling the while on the events of the evening, and Mrs. Foley's unlooked-for kindness. As a rule she was the very reverse of suspicious; but somehow, in spite of her graceful demeanour, she did not trust Aviee's mother—an instinct that was subtler than reason—warned her against her, notwithstanding her apparent friendliness, and the lack of motive she had for trying to conciliate so unimportant a personage as Lady Lyngard's companion, who, as it happened, was the very person who had been the cause of her being in the room.

Presently her thoughts and the flickering shadows cast by the fire all seemed to mix themselves up together; her eyelids closed, and she fell into a deep, dreamless sleep.

How long it lasted she could not have told, but she was suddenly aroused by a faint noise, caused through the chair she had placed against the door being pushed aside very gently and cautiously by some one who had already turned the handle.

Maraquita's first impulse was to scream out and alarm the house; but then the remembrance came that she was alone, and that the servants' wing, and that Mrs. Foley was really the only person within the house; and while she was thus debating the door was pushed open, and a female figure, stealing quietly in, advanced with a cautiously gliding movement to the bedside.

Our heroine was certainly not a superstitious girl, but it must be confessed that just for one minute the remembrance of what Aviee had said about her being haunted came back to her, and she was conscious of a strange, sinking feeling

at the heart, not greatly removed from terror, of the unknown spirit-world, which hitherto she had been inclined to ridicule.

The fire had burnt low, but all at once a coal fell in, and shot out a long spire of flame, which fell on the face of the intruder, distinctly revealing the features; and then, with a feeling of relief as well as surprise, Maraquita saw it was none other than Mrs. Foley!

What brought her there at such an hour, and in such a manner? The young girl asked herself, and, at the same time, resolved to make no movement, but give herself a chance of gaining an answer to her query, by feigning sleep, and seeing what would happen next.

Mrs. Foley stood for a moment motionless, and listened to her guest's breathing, which was calm and regular, and apparently satisfied her that Maraquita slumbered; then she lighted a candle she had brought with her, and held it in front of the girl's face. It was perfectly tranquil and composed, so she put the candle on the table beside her, and after turning down the bedclothes, fastened her night-dress and bared the left shoulder, thus revealing a crescent-shaped mark of a bright red colour—evidently a birthmark.

Mrs. Foley drew a deep breath as if she had received a shock of some kind, and sank down on a chair, putting her hand to her eyes, and remaining perfectly still for three or four minutes, during which Maraquita was afraid lest the loud beating of her heart might betray her.

It seemed to her that if her visitor remained much longer she would be forced to cry out, or give some token, showing she was aware of her presence.

But Mrs. Foley, having attained her object, had no further motive for staying.

She again gazed intently at the mark, as though to assure herself she was not mistaken, and then carefully pulled up the bedclothes, took up her candle, and quitted the room as silently as she had entered.

CHAPTER IV.

The next afternoon was keen and frosty, but bright with sunshine, that if it did not in reality give much warmth, at least lent its appearance to the landscape.

The sky was very clear, and of a deep, intense blue, against which the network of twigs on the elms looked like a fine tracery of delicate lace, sparkling with a fairy-like coating of icicles above the crisp earth; and in the air was a keen exhilaration, such as comes sometimes in the after-Christmas days.

Maraquita, Aviee, and Sir Piers who had ridden over to the Manor—all felt themselves affected by it as they walked through the avenue to the large pond at the end, whose waters now lay bound under the silent spell of the Ice King.

"Who will deny winter has its charms!" said the Baronet, who seemed to have thrown off the semi-gloom that so often oppressed him, and yielded himself to the influence of Aviee's insouciant gaiety.

"People may grumble as much as they like about our treacherous British climate, but for my part I am inclined to think it is, on the whole, as good as any other."

"You haven't given yourself a chance of testing it lately," returned Aviee. "Do you intend staying at home now?"

"I think so; but I must wait, and let circumstances guide me in a measure. I have arrived at that age, Miss Foley, when one says 'yes' or 'no' with a reservation, because experience has taught me what very little control we have over our own actions—we are all slaves of an imperious destiny."

Aviee shrugged her shoulders sceptically.

"I don't believe it, Sir Piers!—at least so far as women are concerned. If I want a thing I generally contrive to get it."

"May you continue in the way you have begun, and suffer no disappointments."

"I don't anticipate them, at all events," she said, blithely; "it seems to me that the true,

philosophy consists in taking the goods the gods give one, and making the best of them, without troubling about future consequences. I never spoil a pleasure by wondering what I shall have to pay for it."

They had now arrived at the edge of the pond, and Sir Piers was proceeding to unstrap the bundle of skates thrown over his shoulder when a figure suddenly appeared from the little belt of pines and Scotch fir, which, as it advanced nearer, proved to be that of Dr. Lascelles.

"Are you coming to join us?" said the Baronet, who had rather taken a fancy to his new neighbour.

"No," rejoined Lascelles, flushing a little. "I was on my way to the Manor to see the house-keeper, who Mrs. Foley sent word this morning was not very well."

"There is not much the matter with her—only a cold I think; and it won't make any particular difference whether you go now or an hour later," observed Aviee, lifting her eyes from the ground to give him a glance of shy entreaty that he was powerless to withstand. And so, being provided with a pair of extra skates that Sir Piers had brought, he allowed himself to remain, in spite of the warning reason gave him of his folly.

Mrs. Foley, watching the trio start from the Manor, had observed with satisfaction that Sir Piers was at her daughter's side, and had hoped this order would continue during the whole of the expedition—a hope not destined to be fulfilled; for directly they were on the ice Aviee and Lascelles started off together, leaving the others to follow.

Perhaps it was the rapid exercise and the delightful motion of skimming along that smoothly polished surface, or perhaps—and this is more likely—it was the sense of her own buoyant youth asserting itself, but assuredly a change came over Maraquita; and instead of the quiet reserve that usually characterised her she was as gay, as animated, and apparently as happy as Aviee herself.

In youth it is so very hard to be miserable. Nature herself forbids it, and, strive as she might, Maraquita could not fight against the spell which made the blood come hotly through her veins, and her pulses throb with a vigour that sent the vivid colour of a pomegranate's red heart to her cheeks, the brilliance of frost on stars to her lovely eyes—her whole being now so distinct with a new delight.

"Miss Leigh," said Sir Piers, looking at her as they paused for a moment, "there is something different in you this afternoon—you are elated, excited."

"No," she answered, smiling at him, "I have just awoke to the truth of the philosophy Aviee advocates—that of enjoying the present, and making the most of it."

"And you think she's right?"

"I am sure. The opportunities of practising it come seldom enough, but at least, when they do, we can take advantage of them."

He did not speak for a moment; then, with the air of one, who makes a sudden determination, he said,—

"I also will become Miss Foley's disciple—rather later in the day than you, it is true, but still, not too late, we'll hope. Come, give me your hand, and we will make the circuit of the island."

He took it without waiting for his command to be obeyed, and holding it in his, they started off, swiftly and smoothly, in long graceful lines that were the very poetry of motion.

The sun travelled slowly round to the west; a crimson glory flashed above the sombre darkness of the pine-wood, and reflected itself in the gleaming steel-blue of the ice; then the early winter darknesses set in, and night put on her regalia of star-jewels, which glittered with a keen, chill lustre up in the purple dome above, while from beyond the trees appeared—

The cold, clear moon, the queen of Heaven's bright

Who makes all beautiful on which she smiles,
That wandering shrine of soft, yet fiery flame,
Which ever is transformed, yet still the same,
And warms not, but illumines.



"DID YOU WISH TO SEE THE PICTURES?" MARAQUITA ASKED AS THE STRANGER ADVANCED.

After taking off his companion's skates, Sir Piers offered his arm, and they set off for the Manor, and to Maraquita that walk, through the twilight stillness of the winter evening, seemed like the beginning of a new era in her life—the birth of a phase of feeling which she dared not analyse, like to whose subtle sweetness nothing she had experienced could ever compare.

She said very little, but the baronet made up for her silence by talking as he seldom took the trouble to talk. He spoke of his travels, of the strange cities he had seen, the strange sights he had witnessed—he led her in fancy through the superb palaces of the Orient, across sandy stretches of desert, under the drooping palms and luxuriant vegetation of the tropics, away to trackless depths of virgin forests where Nature's Temple was unvisited by the foot of man, and strange flowers blossomed in the gorgeous profusion of their untrained loveliness, unseen by human eye.

Meanwhile, Avico and Lascelles were following, slowly enough, in spite of the cold.

"I think," said the young girl, looking up at the sky, with the air of one in a position to fathom its secrets, "I think the frost will continue; and, if so, we can have some more skating to-morrow."

He did not reply.

"You will come!" she continued, half-heatingly, and stealing a glance at his face, which looked very pale in the starlight.

"I think not."

"But why?" after a pause. "You are fond of skating, and"—with a little constrained laugh—"you don't object to our society, I suppose?"

"That," he returned, gravely, "is a remark to which I am sure no answer is needed."

"Then what should prevent your joining us, if it would give you pleasure?"

"The fear lest the pleasure should become so great and necessary to me that I should be unable to forego it!" he answered, with quick passion, stopping suddenly, and facing her.

"Why do you compel me to say these things?"

Why do you render the resolve I had made so much harder to keep? You know the reason I ought not to come—you must know quite well, it is you I fear, and the intoxication your presence brings!"

Just for a second the vehemence of his tone startled her, and she drew back; then another feeling, stronger than all, made her put out her hand and lay it on his sleeve.

"But why should you fear me?" she said, very softly, raising her luminous eyes, and hardly able to speak the words through the heavy beating of her heart.

"Because I love you!"

There was a moment's silence; he made no movement towards her even while his eyes were fixed on her face with an agony of tenderness in their rapt gaze; and though the mere touch of her slender hand sent a thrill through all his pulses, he did not attempt to take it in his own.

"I love you!" he repeated, "but I had no right to tell you so, because I have no right to ask you to be my wife. You are a rich heiress, and I only a poor struggling surgeon; still this is not the only thing that stands in the way. There is a secret in my life which I cannot tell you now, but which is enough to prevent me from asking any woman to marry me."

"A secret!" she echoed, in a faint whisper, growing as white as he was; "is it a secret of sin?"

"Yes, a sin committed many years ago, when the temptation was very great, and I was very young. Ah! Avico—darling—don't judge me too harshly. Heaven knows how bitterly I have repented, and how, even at this moment, I am doing my best to expiate it!"

"Will you not tell me what it was?"

"I cannot," he said, groaning, "not yet! In a little while, perhaps, all necessity for concealment will be over, and then you shall hear everything. I know how wrong I have been to say so much to you, but at first, I never dreamed it would come to this; and my life was so hopeless, so dreary, that to give up your society was like shutting a

ray of sunlight out of a dark room. Now I see my mistake, and for the future I must not even approach within the sound of your voice lest it should make me forget honour and my own resolution; but though Fate has parted us, yet believe this much, Avico—that I love you, darling, I love you!"

And to Avico, startled and bewildered, it seemed the beginning of her romance was also its end.

(To be continued.)

ONE of the latest achievements is a novel sort of tile, which is made from chemical compounds, which are as yet a profound secret, aside from the fact that sawdust and lime are among the ingredients. The compound is made into a sort of paste or pulp, and while damp is put into moulds and subjected to extremely heavy pressure. It forms a tile which is said to be in every way more durable and satisfactory than wood or any other kind of flooring. It is susceptible of high polish, may be made in any colour or size, and can be decorated after any design.

EXPERIMENTS are being made in the use of the sand blast for removing old paint, and the general impression is that this process will prove a great success. The small particles of sharp sand slowly and surely cut away the paint from every crevice and angle. There has been some discussion as to the advisability of softening up the paint by any process. This would certainly be a mistake, as the harder the paint the better hold the sand can take upon it. New paint that has more or less elasticity is found exceedingly difficult to remove in this way; but after it has become oxidized by exposure to the air it comes off with very little trouble. In this same connection it may be said that comparatively new paint is not difficult to remove by other means. A strong solution of potash or soda will cut it off quite rapidly. It has been the old and hardened paint that has given the most trouble.



"WHO IS THERE?" LINDA ASKED, IN A VOICE THAT DID NOT SOUND LIKE HER OWN.

THE BROWN LADY.

—10—

CHAPTER XI.

"VERY kind of Miss Gaspard, I am sure!" muttered Linda, after they had parted. I wish she could see this apparition at first-hand herself, and have done with it. It's rather rude of her wanting to do her ghost-seeing at my expense!"

Soon after this Mr. Holroyd had a very sharp attack of bronchitis. Linda nursed him through it with great care, and was so invaluable in his sick-room that she stirred a long, torpid feeling in the old gentleman's heart, and he sent up to London and ordered and procured for her, as a "Christmas box," a truly superb sealskin coat.

It cost forty guineas; and Mr. Holroyd, who clung tighter to his purse year by year, groaned aloud in anguish of spirit when he got the bill, and it was read out to him by Leech.

Linda knew nothing of this little scene, and overwhelmed Mr. Holroyd with her thanks when he presented it to her on Christmas morning. She was in ecstasies with her coat; it was so long, so soft, so comfortable, and—so becoming! at least, so the old glass in Mr. Holroyd's sanctum averred.

"You'll like to go to church to show it!" growled the old cynic. "I know what's in your thoughts."

"I would like to go to church on Christmas-day, certainly, whether I wore the coat or not," responded the girl, with complete composure.

"Well, as you have not been out of the place for a fortnight, thanks to nursing me, you shall go—aye, and wear the coat too—and you shall put a couple of sovereigns in the plate from the blind old man at Carrisbrooke."

The bells were pealing merrily, and numbers of people were flocking to church as Linda walked briskly over the hard, frozen roads between the hedges heavy with snow. The sunny day was

crisp, with a frosty wind in the air, and the walk gave Linda a lovely colour.

She really looked remarkably beautiful as she entered church—a little late—just as the bell ceased, and walked up two well-crowded aisles and took her seat in the Holroyds' large, empty pew.

It was more of a room than a pew; it contained arm-chairs, hassocks, a centre table, a fireplace, and overhanging it were monuments piled over monuments right up to the church roof—monuments to dead and gone Holroyds. The Dacres' family pew was opposite, and was full.

For the first time in Linda's experience she felt quite abashed as she glanced across the aisle and met point-blank what seemed at least twenty pairs of eyes fixed upon her.

If she had had the courage to look again she would have seen that there were really only five people altogether—namely, Squire Dacres, red-faced and pompous, gazing at her over his gold pince nez; Mrs. Dacres, surprised and jealous, arranged in superb sables and a French bonnet, staring hard in sheer, vulgar curiosity; Mrs. Dacres's sister, a plain, red-haired edition of herself; and a Colonel Campbell, elderly, spruce, and very well got-up, a friend of Captain Dacres's come for the shooting; Captain Dacres, last not least, handsome, dark, and abstracted, buried in his own thoughts.

When the service was over, the last hymn sung, and the collection made, the congregation trooped out, and friends greeted friends in the wide church porch. Linda expected no friends and no Christmas greetings, and walked quickly away through the churchyard alone.

"Who—who was that in the Holroyds' pew?" asked Squire Dacres of Miss Cotton, who looked brilliant in a ruby velvet costume trimmed with the richest fur, and carried a muff worth fifty guineas. "She's the image of the family. I could have sworn that it was Arabella herself sitting there, only I know she's in the churchyard this twenty years."

"Image of the family!" echoed Maria, with her terrible peacock laugh. "Well that is a good joke!" glancing at Captain Holroyd. Would you like to hear who she is? You are looking quite interested. I saw you staring at her in church, you wretch!"

"I assure you—" he began, hastily.

"I assure you," she interrupted, "that this girl you are believing to be a tip-top swell is nothing more than old Mr. Holroyd's reader!"

"But she is a relation! I'll swear that. She has the Holroyd nose," said the Squire doggedly.

"Your imagination is running away with you, Squire. Holroyd nose, indeed! She is a girl he picked up in London, and never heard of till she applied for the place. He took her out of charity. She was starving, and"—looking round her impressively, as she drove a nail in the coffin of Linda's good name—"she had no character."

Mrs. Dacres drew herself up and smiled. She was rather afraid, hitherto, that the lovely face in the opposite pew would be its owner's passport into society, and bring her a dangerous rival. No fear of that now, and this news gave her an inward glow of satisfaction.

"No character!" echoed the Squire. "Well, she has a sweet and innocent face as anyone could see. However, whatever her morals are they can't affect old Holroyd's morals. For that matter, he never had any—ha! ha!" he concluded, with a boisterous laugh.

"She was absurdly dressed for her station," put in Mrs. Dacres's sister. "Such a sealskin jacket, and I saw her put two sovereigns in the plate!"

"Conscience money, perhaps!" exclaimed Mrs. Dacres.

"Don't you think we might change the subject!" said her stepson.

He spoke in a deliberate way, and had a very pleasant voice.

"Considering it's Christmas Day, too, when

we are all supposed to be at peace and goodwill with our neighbours."

"That's so like you, Rupert!" retorted the lady with a sneer. "You are always in the opposition. If we had said she was an angel you would at once have tried to prove her the reverse."

"Only I have never yet heard you say that any other woman was an angel," returned Captain Dacres, with a significant smile.

"No use in you and Rupert keeping us all here, whilst you fight over this young person's body, as it were," put in the Squire, testily. "Come, let us be going; my feet are frozen. Maria, my dear, you and Miss Small will come to lunch? Rupert, look after Maria;" and thus the little party scattered, but not before Mrs. Dacres secured the last word.

"I never fight about anyone, John—least of all a creature like Mr. Holroyd's reader. Thank goodness, we are not likely to come across her, and never to see her except in a church."

"Yes!" said her stepson, and even there you need not see her unless you choose. You can draw the curtains of the pew, and shut her out from sight."

Jedith walked rapidly homewards, little guessing of the great battle which had been fought on her behalf. In the avenue she encountered Nan looking very rosy and anxious, with a huge bunch of mistletoe in her hand.

"Rather a dangerous bouquet, isn't it, Nan?" she said, gaily.

"Oh! with William here, no one would take advantage," said Nan, with a giggle. "We are going to dine at the lodge, miss; but I'll be home early, as this is one of Mrs. Glubb's bad days."

Linda walked on. She half smiled Nannie. Nannie looked so radiant. How did it feel to have a sweetheart! She need not trouble her head for she would never know. Her future was already sketched out. She would go on being "reader and companion" to old people, and lending them the use of her eyes till she was old and sightless herself; and then, if she had laid by enough money to make a provision for her old age she might be very thankful.

This was rather a dreary outlook for a pretty girl of twenty; but she soon forgot all her melancholy forebodings in Mr. Holroyd's company. He was particularly cheerful and talkative. He had had a letter from his dear brother Isaac, and he and Gordon purposed paying him a long visit early in the year. Linda dined with her employer, and they had quite a merry *côte-à-côte* over their turkey and plum-pudding.

Linda had a healthy, youthful appetite, and consumed a fair share of that dish peculiar to Christmas. She also partook of a mince-pie, and perhaps this was the reason that her slumbers were disturbed and visited by horrible dreams. From one of these dreams she woke up with a start, trembling all over. What a relief to discover that she was lying in a warm comfortable bed, that the vision of a man with a cruel face and a small clasp-knife in his hand, in the act of locking himself into the room with her with the other hand, was but a nightmare after all! She breathed a deep sigh of relief, so great was her satisfaction; and hark! What was that—an echo or another sigh?

It must have been an echo. There were all sorts of odd noises in this queer, three-cornered old room. Outside it was a cold, bright moon-light night. The shutters were closed, but not barred, nor were the window curtains drawn. A narrow line of light plainly showed the opening in the shutters—an opening about a quarter of an inch in width.

As Linda gazed rather sleepily at this line of light her heart gave a bound that nearly choked her. What was this she saw? Some object had come between the bed and the window for the line of light was obscured for about five feet—the height of a person. Some one, ghost or mortal, was evidently standing between her and the window—standing within two yards of her—at the bottom of the bed!

"Who is there!" she asked, in a voice that

did not sound like her own, but faint and far away.

No answer.

"Who is there?" she repeated, in still more tremulous accents. The only reply was a deep sigh, and the apparition, whatever it was, was gone, for once more the long lines of light was visible from top to bottom.

A horrible dread overwhelmed the girl. There is an uncanniness in strange experiences—in the middle of the night, in a lonely back room—that is capable of shaking the stoutest daylight nerves; and without more ado, Linda plunged her head under the bedclothes, and there lay half suffocated, till morning—welcome morning!—released her from her fears.

CHAPTER XII.

CARRISBROOKS was greatly spruced up in Christmas week. Two temporary men-servants were engaged from the neighbourhood—the oak dining-room was thronged, even—the smoking-room, billiard-room, and two of the best bedrooms, in the new part of the house were put to rights, and had roaring fires in them all day long.

In a few days the guests for whom these preparations had been made, arrived—Mr. Isaac Holroyd and his son.

It was dusk when they made their appearance in Mr. Holroyd's room, after an excellent late luncheon downstairs.

Linda had been twiddling about till the light had failed, and was sitting with her back to the window when the newcomers entered; and, as they entered, the rose to go.

"Stop where you are!" cried Mr. Holroyd. "No need for you to stir, my boy. How are you, Isaac? How are you, Gordon? Glad to see you—or, rather, I'm glad you are here. This is my reader—my eyesight for the present—Miss May."

Linda bowed, and they looked towards her; but the room being naturally a dim one at best of times, with its wainscot of oak and heavy bookshelves, was now nearly dark, and she could not do more than distinguish their forms, and their white shirt fronts.

Mr. Isaac, she noticed, had a deferential, slow, oily way of speaking. His son said but little, and that in a sharp, brief manner, as if it bored him to talk.

She went on knitting steadily, and wishing that she might go away, but she knew her patron too well to move without his permission.

His relations have come down for a couple of months, to keep him company, they said; relations ought to band together at Christmas!" and they were all he had in the world," added Mr. Isaac, with a sigh.

Linda dialled Mr. Isaac even before she could see him, and told herself she was sure that he was a hypocrite. Why should he sigh, because he was his brother's heir?

Presently Leech brought in two candles, followed by one of the men servants with a lamp, and the room was nearly as bright as day.

Linda naturally glanced at once at the strangers. The younger man was sitting nearest to her, and his eyes were fixed on her with an expression of languid curiosity.

He was not nearly so young as she expected—a good deal over thirty. He had a hooked nose, close-cropped black hair, black eyes, and a long black moustache. He might have set for a portrait of a good-looking Mephistopheles.

He was tall apparently, and was particularly well-dressed, in the most perfect and quiet fashion, and displayed a lavish amount of collar and shirt cuff.

Linda shrank from the stare of his bold, black eyes, and turned her gaze on his father.

His father lay back in his arm-chair, gazing at her with his arms folded, and an expression of horror and incredulity. Surely that could not be his everyday expression; and what was there about her that evidently terrified him so much? Was it anything behind her? She looked timidly over her shoulder. No, he was merely staring

point-black at herself, and she stared point-black at him in return.

He was a short, slight, well-made man, with a bald head fringed with white hair; in sharp contrast to this, he had jet-black and very heavy eyebrows, and black eyes, and a black moustache.

He had an unusually square jaw, and a receding-looking, but by no means pleasing countenance—a face that looked as if it could be not only obstinate, but ferocious.

At present the only expression stamped on it was "fear."—Yes, undoubtedly, fear!

"What ails you, sir?" said his son, with a laugh. "You look as if you had seen a ghost!"

"Ghost!" rousing himself by an effort, and sitting up in his chair. "No, but Miss May reminds me of a girl whom I used to know years ago!"

"Ah! An old flame!" exclaimed the son, facetiously. "Where is she now? Dead or alive?"

"Dead! Dead this many years; but these accidental resemblances are apt to give one a shock," he said, passing his handkerchief over his face as he spoke. "And I am very sensitive to old memories. As I am now feeling rather fatigued I'll go and rest before dinner. It's in the oak-room, at the usual hour, I suppose!"

So saying he rose; and with a surprisingly brisk step, and not casting one glance at Linda, he marched out of the room.

What had brought Mr. Isaac Holden away from his comfortable house in Upper Grosvenor-street—close to the Carlton, by the way—down into an empty, dreary house in the midst of winter? Away from his whist, his business, and his club! An imperative necessity—the want of money! Yes, people would hardly believe it, but this is a fact.

What had brought his son with him? Lured from the gaming-table—from his favourite haunts—from theatres and theatrical friends! The same potent reason. His pockets were empty.

He had come down to bleed his miserly old uncle, whose heir he was—bled him politely, of course.

Gordon Holroyd was an extravagant man, in an extravagant set. He lived far beyond his means—had been doing so for years. He owed bills everywhere—bills to tailors, bills to haberdashers, bills to livery stablers, jewellers, wine-merchants, such a crop of blue envelopes as ever was seen as was lying on his table in Jermyn-street!

He had been able to keep his head above water by gambling and betting, and robbing Peter to pay Paul; but latterly his dexterity with the dice and with certain court cards had been regarded with suspicion. He had had to be prudent, and he had lost an unusually large sum on the square, and being a debt of honour it must be paid. And the question was, who was to do so?

His father was cleaned out like himself, and his uncle's purse alone stood between him and ruin. Yes! his affairs were in a desperate state! Not more desperate than his parents', who sat brooding over a fire in his room, and pulling himself together with some Cognac from his flask.

Mr. Isaac Holroyd was a banker—a man of probity, influence, and capital. His name was good for thousands. He was charitable, liberal, and lived in superior style, and had the finest port wine in London. This was the appearance he made to the outer world. He himself—and only he—guessed how false were those appearances.

His name was still great on 'Change, potent in Bank parlour, and influential in Lombard-street.

He was grave, intensely respectable, and highly appreciated in the best society; but Mr. Holroyd—although the name Holroyd and Co., Bankers, seemed as stable as the British Constitution—knew that it was tottering to its fall, and that his own thin, rather mischievous looking hands that he was holding so carefully before the fire, were in imminent danger of a pair of handcuuffs.

Mr. Isaac Holroyd was a forger—as yet unsuspected but nevertheless a forger! Three customers of the Bank had lodged in the hands of

the firm a power of attorney to receive the dividends on large sums in stock and consols. These dividends were regularly paid; but Mr. Holroyd had forged these powers of attorney, and sold out and employed the capital.

His forgeries amounted to thirty thousand pounds. No wonder that latterly he looked haggard and anxious, and his air was less jaunty and dapper. His house had suffered losses—had made bad speculations—and he had ventured more and more, in hopes of retrieving all with one great "coup." Vain illusion! Who ever caught that will-o'-the-wisp "success" with stolen money!

Here were these two desperate men, each come to Carriabrooke with a fixed determination not to leave it without securing their object—their only salvation—a large sum of Mr. Holroyd's savings.

"What a likeness!" groaned the banker. "It's like seeing the dead alive. If it should be the child; but it could not—it could not! I'll cross-examine this strange young woman to-morrow. Yes; to-morrow! What shall we do if she has proofs! Bah! If she had, would she be a reader and companion? Isaac Holroyd, you shake at shadows. You are losing your nerve. Why, Gibb would knock!"

That evening Mr. Isaac Holroyd drank a great deal of wine at dinner, for he was generally an abstemious man.

He was unusually silent and flushed; but his son was too much engrossed in his own plans and his own cares to cast a thought to his parent's strange preoccupation.

After her fright—although she assured herself in the daylight that it was "imagination," nothing more—Linda took the precaution of having a night light in her room. She lit it most carefully, and placed it on the dressing-table, and there it burnt steadily till morning.

At least it behaved in this way for a few nights, and then, one night, when Linda suddenly awoke, she was aroused by a cold wind blowing over her as if a door was open.

She was astonished to find that the room was in darkness. Yes; pitch darkness, for the fire had gone out. What did it all mean? Had the draught blown out the light?

As she lay pondering she was startled by hearing the loud purring of a cat, and then a quick but hollow cough close beside her. Yes, there it was again!

A cold dew broke out upon her forehead; but, serving herself with a great effort, and making the flesh subservient to her will, she sat up and called out—

"Who is there?"

No answer—not a sound—nothing to be seen or heard; and presently she lay down, and tried to persuade herself that it was a dream—a nightmare—just as she had attributed her former fright to the plum-pudding.

The next night was the night after the arrival of the two guests. She had been afoot all day long helping Nan; had gone a message to the village; had read herself quite hoarse during the afternoon, and was well tired out in mind and body when she lay down in the middle of the old, roofless four-poster, and she slept soundly, for how long she knew not.

She was awoke quite suddenly by a plover of wood falling out of the fire—the fire was still burning well, so it could not be very, very late.

She was quite surprised to hear a distant stable clock strike "one," as her sleep-eyes gradually became accustomed to the darkness, or rather to the variable flicker from the fire-light.

Another piece of wood fell out, this time causing a quick blaze, and illuminating the room in a partial manner for a second. In that second the horrified girl was aware of a still brooding figure sitting on the bottom of her bed.

It was seated near the foot, looking towards her. She could not discern its face, but that face was apparently bent on her. She seemed to catch the gleam of a pair of peering eyes.

The figure was a female, and had a large shawl or mantle thrown over its head and shoulders. Could this be the Brown Lady?

CHAPTER XIII.

When Linda realised this terrifying truth, that an apparition was actually sitting on her bed, her heart beat as if it were going to burst; her hair rose from her forehead, she broke out into a cold perspiration—such is the natural fear of the supernatural.

She buried her head under the clothes, of course, and lay trembling. She did not dare to speak or to say, "Who are you?" this time.

The climax of her agony was reached when the figure got off her bed and walked slowly up to the bed-head.

She heard its heavy, deliberate feet, and then—horror of horrors!—it seized the bed-clothes in a grasp that there was no resisting, and pulled them steadily and determinedly away from the girl's face!

Vainly she clutched at them. The figure's hands were as cold as marble, for she felt one in the struggle, and as strong as steel; and then the thing spoke, and said in a slow, rather deep voice,—

"Beware of Isaac Holroyd and his son! Do not trust them!"

If the ghost said anything more than this it was lost on Linda, for she had fainted. Yes, gone off into a dead swoon for the first time in her existence!

When she came to herself she was once more alone—she felt it somehow. A weight seemed removed from her mind.

She was alone, and in utter darkness, for the fire was now completely out; but all the same, she was undisturbed for the remainder of the night.

When seven o'clock came, and Nannie stood at her bedside with a candle and a cup of tea, she was horrified at Miss May's appearance.

She looked ghastly pale, and as if she had not slept a wink.

Before she could speak, or ask a single question, Miss May said,—

"Nannie, I have had a most awful night! I wonder I have any reason this morning! I have had a visit from the Brown Lady!"

"No!" ejaculated Nannie.

"Yes! She actually sat at the foot of the bed. I saw her plainly—as plainly as I see you now!"

"What was she like?"

"She had piercing eyes, and a shawl over her head."

"Yes; that's her!" returned Nannie, impatiently.

"I thought you said there was no such thing, Nannie!" said the young lady, rather sharply.

"Oh! what was the use of saying there was, and frightening you for nothing! You might never have seen her; but now you have, of course seeing is believing."

"Of course. And if I see her again I shall die!"

"Not you, miss. She never does anyone a bit of harm!"

"She dragged the bedclothes away from my face last night. I thought she was going to murder me, and I was too terrified even to scream, my tongue seemed frozen! Oh, I shall never forget it!"

"Then did she speak to you?" inquired Nannie, quickly, with an air of a sudden apprehension.

"Yes; she spoke!"

"And may I make bold to ask what she said?"

"No, Nannie, you may not! At any rate, I cannot tell you now."

"Well, miss, I may guess, mayn't I? It was something about Mr. Holroyd—I mean Mr. Isaac and his son!"

"Give me my tea, Nannie, and don't guess any more! Why are you so early this morning?"

"Because Mr. Gordon Holroyd is going out hunting, and the meet is a long way off. There's a grand thaw this morning. He is going hunting in more ways than one. He has an eye on Miss Cotton. She hunts, too, and she's a great helress, you know."

"But she's engaged to Captain Dacres!"

"She would like to be," said Nannie with a sniff. "But she will never be Mrs. Rupert Dacres as sure as my name is Nannie Leach! You're to pour out tea, miss, and breakfast is at half-past eight, and if I might make so bold, you'll say nothing of what you saw last night to anyone! You may be sure of one thing, she means you no harm!" and with this reassuring statement, Miss Nannie hurried out of the room.

Linda made breakfast for the two guests in the oak room, and was very pale and silent. She saw Mr. Gordon Holroyd mount a smart bay hunter and gallop away in his red coat. He looked rather well in scarlet; it suited his dark saturnine features, and he was admirably turned out; every bow and button was in its correct place, and he had actually a bunch of violets in his button-hole. Gordon Holroyd understood what he was about when he went a-wooing, and the powerful factor a good tailor is in a man's success. When Gordon had disappeared his father, who had been viewing his offspring from the window, turned to Miss May and said,—

"It's too early to begin your duties, Miss May, I know, and you have no housekeeping troubles to engross your time. Will you come into the smoking-room, where there is a splendid fire, and keep me company for a little! I've brought down some Christmas papers and magazines that you might like to look over."

Linda gladly accepted this offer; the illustrated papers and magazines were an unusual treat, and she was soon immersed in the coloured pictures of the *Graphic* and *Illustrated*. More than once, as she turned over the leaves, she felt conscious of being under the masked batteries of Mr. Holroyd's eyes; and once as she glanced up and met them directly, she noticed how keen, anxious, and almost cruel was his gaze.

"The likeness is extraordinary!" he exclaimed, in an apologetic manner. "You have a great resemblance to a—Miss Smith, whom I knew many years ago. May I ask, my dear young lady, what part of the country you come from, and if you have any relations of that name?"

"No!" returned the girl, promptly. "I have no relations that I am aware of. None at all!"

"Extraordinary!" he ejaculated, "and your native place?"

"I really do not know; but I lived for years—from infancy, I believe—at the village of Manister in Cheshire."

Mr. Isaac's face was now of a livid colour; his teeth were clenched over his white lips, and he seized a hand-screen, and held it up between him and the fire; and then after a second's delay, he asked in a forced, harsh voice,—

"With whom did you live? You cannot live alone, eh! from your infancy?"

"No; I lived with Miss Mee. She was no relation, but someone paid her for my keep!"

Linda noticed that the hand that held the screen before Mr. Isaac's face was shaking visibly, as if he had a sharp attack of palsy.

"Did you never hear who sent you to Miss Mee, and who paid for you?"

"No!"

"Never hear who you belonged to, or where you came from?"

"Never! Miss Mee was about to tell me everything, and to give me some letters that would throw a light on my history, but she died."

"Oh, she did, did she?" drawing a long sigh of relief, and suddenly laying aside the hand-screen.

"Yes; more than a year ago."

"And you have not the smallest idea of who you are; or who you belong to; or who paid Miss Mee for giving you a home?"

"I had not till quite recently," said Linda, looking at him boldly.

"Oh! Pray what do you mean?"

"I have a vague suspicion of who I am—of the family to whom I belong, and of who paid Miss Mee for keeping my existence a dead secret."

"Oh, you have, have you, my dear young lady!" he said, adjusting his chair an inch or two nearer hers, and looking at her steadily. "And

will you share your secret with one who takes a deep interest in you, although but an acquaintance of a few hours. I feel a strong desire to be of use to you, Miss May!"

"You are very kind, Mr. Holroyd—most kind, indeed; but my ideas are really so vague that I would be ashamed to trouble you with them. Indeed, I feel sure that you would laugh at them."

"Laugh at them!"

"Well, at any rate, I wish to keep them to myself for the present. For if they prove mere foolish delusions no one but myself will be any the wiser."

"A most prudent resolve," said her companion, with a little bow. Young ladies with your discretion are indeed a *rara avis*."

"A girl like me must be discreet, seeing that I have no one to excuse or shelter my errors—no one to pull me out of scrapes, if I fall into them."

"You will never fall into scrapes, my dear Miss May. You are much too long-headed and cautious a young lady. I am only sorry that my little advances have been repulsed. I am an old man; I have a wide experience of the world, and I take a sincere interest in young people. I take a sincere interest in you!"

"I believe you do!" she returned, with a smile that baffled this hoary old sinner. "Thank you very much, Mr. Holroyd. Some day, perhaps, I shall take advantage of your kindness. It is time for me to be going up to open the post-bag, and read the letters." And, rising, she made him a little playful bow, and went out of the room.

"A most extraordinary girl, as clever as the dence!" he muttered to himself, as he sat staring into the fire, and slowly rubbing his chin. "Is she in jest or earnest? She's Arabella's own daughter without Arabella's sensitive, impulsive heart, and with ten times Arabella's brains. To think of her turning up here of all places, when I thought by this time she was sunk far away in Cheshire, and possibly married to some young farming lout!"

"Old Mee told her nothing—she can know nothing. Isaac Holroyd, you are in a very ticklish position, and it requires skill to get out of it. However, you are more than a match for any girl in her teens; and the first thing I have to do is to find out from her patron how and where he picked her up. The second is to get her out of the place as soon as possible. And the third is to take care that she is hid away this time without the possibility of coming back."

"If her grandfather guessed who she really was, if he could only see her face, my chances and Gordon's chances would not be worth half-a-crown! She is the heiress-at-law!—the heiress-at-law!" he repeated. "Well, we must manoeuvre her out of this, and get her some other situation. This is a blow to me—a terrible blow! When the lights were brought in last night, and I looked up and saw Arabella staring at me, I thought I should have some kind of seizure. The girl herself noticed it, and takes advantage of my weakness; but I have got over my shock, and my weakness too. And now I'll go up and have a long talk with my blind brother."

Mr. Isaac Holroyd undertook Linda's tasks for that morning. He opened, he read, he answered letters; he soothed and softened his listener with various tender reminiscences of their boyhood, of their youth, and flattered him insidiously and delicately.

Having thus carefully prepared the ground he set to work to sow a crop of the seeds of suspicion in his brother's mind—suspicion regarding "This Miss May." Who was she? She had no belongings that she could bring forward, no relations, and no character.

She looked a bold, forward minx, and had no doubt some scheme of her own on hand. She might be one of a firm of London sharpers. She was too young to have taken the post for the reasons she averred. With her face and her brass she could easily have got an engagement at a theatre.

Lady Carleton had picked her up, and had not Lady Carleton an established reputation for pick-

ing up some out of the gutters, and burning her foolish old fingers! A protégée of Lady Carleton's that stamped her at once; and if Mr. Holroyd would take a brother's advice the sooner the young woman was out of the house the better. Give her a quarter's salary, and let her go!

This conversation was not a brief one. Mr. Isaac took some time to unfold his suspicions, and did his work craftily and well. His word had hitherto been law at Carriabrooke (as long as he did not want any money), and now he was amazed to discover that, although his brother had no suspicion as to who his reader was, she had taken such a strong hold upon his withered, old fancy that he would not listen to a word against her; and the more his relative argued sweetly and plausibly the more obstinate he became.

Mr. Isaac thought he had nothing to do but state his case, offer his views, and present Miss May with the key of the street door, and her salary; but he found himself miserably mistaken.

"Granting she is a bad lot, as you say," said his brother; "and, mind you, it does not follow that she is, I'll keep her all the same. She suits me. She has conducted herself well here. No one has a word against her. She has a good temper, a light footstep and a nice voice."

"But—" began Isaac.

"But I never interfere in your household, Isaac, and I beg you not to interfere in mine. Although I'm blind I'm not a fool; and I can manage my own affairs to my own satisfaction still!"

Thus Isaac was repulsed. His brother was cross and querulous; and here was a whole day lost, for this was no time to broach the true reason of his errand. He could not breathe the magic word "money" in the invalid's present frame of mind.

CHAPTER XIV.

"WHAT have you done to set Isaac against you?" was her patron's startling query to Linda May, as she sat with him that evening.

"Nothing—nothing that I know of," she answered, much surprised.

"Oh, well, there must be something!" grunted the old man. "He wanted me to bundle you out of the house neck and crop; but I won't. As long as you are quiet and well-behaved here—here you shall stay!"

"Thank you, Mr. Holroyd!" said the girl, in a low voice.

Mr. Holroyd was adding a small rivet to her already pretty secure convictions. Why had Mr. Isaac started at her likeness? Why was he so anxious to know who she was? Why had he looked so fierce, and his face of such an ashen colour?

Why was he trying to have her instantly dismissed? Why? Because he believed she was Arabella Holroyd's daughter. This belief was now becoming a certainty in her own mind.

He had hidden away the baby, and pretended that it was dead, and she herself was this baby now grown up; now accidentally living under her grandfather's roof, and now resolved to claim her own; but she had no direct proofs, no letters—nothing but a mere intangible feeling that she was the grandchild of this blind old man. How could she prove herself? How establish her claim?

"Mr. Holroyd!" she said, suddenly; "will you do me a great favour?"

"Umph!" he said. "It depends upon what it is! Want your salary raised?"

"No! I want nothing that will cost a penny!"

"Very well; out with it!"

"It is a plea for your daughter's picture."

He started as she spoke, and dropped his stick. "She is dead! She suffered much. She died of cold and exposure, and perhaps want, here, within sight of the light of this her home."

"You are old, you are alone; surely you have forgiven her!"

"What is it to you!" he broke in, fiercely.

"What next, I wonder? I engage you as my

servant—yes, my servant, Miss May—and you take upon yourself to meddle with my family affairs, affairs about which even my own brother would not speak—would not dare to speak!"

"Oh, Mr. Holroyd, please don't be angry with me!" she exclaimed, taking his hand in hers, and replacing his stick. "I would not vex you, or seem impertinent or interfering, for anything!"

"But you are! you are!" he cried, passionately.

"Only hear my request. It is this: that your daughter's picture, now in disgrace, and turned to the wall in a lumber-room, may be reinstated, may be placed with the other portraits in the gallery! If you will not have pity upon it, who will?"

For a long time there was no answer to this appeal, and Linda feared that she had been too bold.

Then he said,—

"What good will it do me? I cannot see it; I wish—yes, I wish I could!"

"Mr. Holroyd, your harsh words often do injustice to your kind heart, and you have a kind heart!" said his companion, impetuously.

"You are quite wrong," he returned. "I have no heart at all! I have no feeling for anything! I care for nobody. Now everything is indifferent to me—even my dinner! Now go; I wish to be by myself. You need not come back this evening."

Meanwhile the two gentlemen downstairs were setting over their wine, the elder one grave and silent, the younger talkative, and almost boisterous.

"Miss Cotton was out to-day; she's a clipping rider. I had it all my own way. Dacres did not show. I think she'd take me if it was only to try and pique him; or, at any rate, she'd pretend to take me, to draw him on; but once I got any kind of promise from her, I'd make her stick to it, you may trust me. A hundred thousand down, isn't it, sir? and old Cotton is sure to cut 'up well!'"

His father looked at him, and nodded abstractedly. He did not seem to have heard half of what was said.

"We rode home together, she and I, nearly eight miles, through the lanes in the dusk, and I made the most of my time. I left her at home, too, and I'm dining there to-morrow. I don't mind betting that it will come off yet. Here's her very good health!" and he tossed off a bumper of prime old port, for which the Carriabrooke cellars were so justly famous.

"What rubbish you are talking, Gordon!" said his father, testily.

"Rubbish!" echoed Gordon. "I'm talking the best of sense!"

"Yes, rubbish! I've made a most unpleasant discovery, I can tell you. Can you guess it?"

"That my uncle is going to be an old fool, and marry his pretty reader!" said his son with an incredulous laugh.

"Much worse than that. The pretty reader, as you call her, is Arabella Holroyd's child, and his granddaughter and heiress! What do you say to that?" and he leaned back in his chair, and looked fixedly at his son.

"I say—I say that it's a hoax! I say that it's not true!" returned Gordon, raising his voice almost to a shout, and bringing down his heavy fist on the table, and thereby making all the glassed dance and jingle.

"It's as true as that you and I are sitting here!" said his father, solemnly. "Only too terribly true!"

"And pray, what is to become of us?" asked his son, with a sort of withering calmness. "Our goose is most effectually cooked if this discovery holds water."

"Not cooked yet, but dangerously near the fire; and it must be our business to save it."

"Our business. What on earth can I do?"

"You can do a great deal. Indeed, it all rests with you—not with me—to get us out of this hole."

"How!"

"Why, you must marry the girl. She's your cousin; she's the heiress. Here you are on the

spot—no other admirers. A romantic situation, and the coast clear. It all lies in a nutshell."

"When!" whistled his son. "And just supposing, for the sake of argument, that she won't have me!" he asked, with extraordinary modesty.

"She is sure to have you."

"But if she won't?" persisted Gordon Holroyd.

"If she won't—well, then," and here he dropped his voice suddenly, "we must get her out of the way."

Gordon stared at his father for a moment, and then the old gentleman went on,—

"So far we are all right. She has no proofs. My brother believes the baby died, and has not the ghost of a suspicion; but he likes the girl, and won't hear of sending her away, for I tried that."

"How do you know she is the grandchild?" interrupted his son.

"The moment I looked at her last night I knew she was Arabella's daughter. I got a dreadful shock. It seemed as if it were Arabella herself sitting there, and I knew that the child had not died. I made it over to the wife of my butler—old Case—who was as silent as the grave, and she sent it off to a friend in the country who had been in service and who had retired, and would be glad of a child to occupy her, and would not object to a small income with it. Her name was Mee—a queer name. My lawyer paid her twenty-five pounds a year till lately—within the last two or three years—when I thought the girl might provide for herself. I let Miss Mee know that the child was of gentle blood, but born to no name, and I desired her to be brought up like a village girl, who would have no grand ideas and no accomplishments, and who was to learn to occupy an humble station."

"Yes; but this girl does not look like that. She is as proud and independent as a young colt!"

"And has a very shrewd head on her shoulders. She has been putting two and two together, and trying to make out who she is. She told me frankly that she had been brought up by Miss Mee, that she had no relations, that Miss Mee was dead, and had left her in ignorance as to who she is."

"For which you owe Miss Mee a handsome tombstone. I can't see what there is to fear."

"Don't you! I differ from you. The girl candidly confessed that she has an idea who she is."

"Lots of girls have mad ideas."

"Yes; but a self-possessed, clever young woman like your cousin—yes, she is your cousin—is not likely to harbour any mad thoughts. Our course is plain. You must be very civil, courteous, and gain her confidence; then gain her affections! Announce your engagement, and when that is proclaimed I shall suddenly discover who she is, and I shall have the happiness of placing his long-lost grandchild in your uncle's arms!"

"Ah! you have it all mapped out; but I like your rôle much better than mine. Miss Cotton is far more in my style. Remember the last fiasco."

"I remember nothing whatever about it," said his father, with a stony face; "but I must ask you to remember one or two things that you seem to forget—that time is short; that your need of money is desperate; and that, in your situation, you cannot afford to pick and choose. Miss May is handsome, well born, young, clever, and rich. What more do you want, I would like to know?"

"I don't want anything," muttered the other, pouring out a glass of port and holding it between his eyes and the light; "I only want to be left alone."

"Well, if you can get your creditors to do that no one else will trouble you," said his father, sarcastically. "I wonder what it would take to clear you?"

"Don't ask," groaned the other. "I haven't the courage to ask myself. It's the IO U's to the fellows at the Arcadian Club that are the worst; that must be paid. If I can't settle up

within three weeks I must make a bolt of it and quit the country."

"Well, in that case, if I were you I'd much sooner hold on and marry your cousin—your rich cousin Linda. Surely she is a great improvement on Mrs. Gordon, number one!" and the old man laughed a loud, harsh laugh—a laugh that found an odd—oh! a very odd—echo in the empty, wainscotted hall outside; an echo that was so startling that his son looked over at him uneasily, and said,—

"By George! Did you hear that!"

"Pooh!" returned his father, contemptuously, "you are as bad as an old woman. Smoking has ruined your nerves. Every stir in this straggling old place sounds odd. We shall have you running away from your own shadow next!"

(To be continued.)

THE SECRET OF THE MINE.

—31—

CHAPTER XIII.—(continued.)

MAURICE FAIRFAX sprang hurriedly to his feet in the vehicle, and looked fixedly at his companion.

"You surely will not tell one word of this down in the village!" he cried, hoarsely.

"Not unless I am called upon to speak," he returned.

"You would not injure your own friend's son?" cried Fairfax, hoarsely. "You would screen me if necessary?"

"No!" said Mr. Stanford. "I would tell the truth if I was called upon to do so, at whatever cost."

"It would ruin me if you were to speak in this way!" cried Fairfax.

"Then you should not have placed me in a position where it would be necessary to do so."

"You dare not!" cried the young man, trembling like an aspen-leaf.

All in a moment he had lost his self-possession. He remembered only that they were nearing the village with every rapid stride of the swift-footed horses, and that Mr. Stanford meant to tell the story which he had in an unlucky moment acquainted him with.

Before him he saw a prison-cell, with the black, haunting eyes of the dead girl staring at him, and he recoiled.

No, no! this man must never tell his story down in the village. He must never reach there, were he Pauline's father a dozen times.

Half an hour later the miners were startled by the terrible news that there had been a dreadful accident on the mountain road. Mr. Stanford and a guest from Castle Royal had been riding towards town behind a spirited team. They took fright at the blasting of some rocks a few yards distant, and ran away. The two men were thrown violently to the ground. Mr. Maurice Fairfax escaped with but a few scratches.

Wilfrid Stanford, the old silver king, had not been so fortunate.

He had been left for dead by the roadside, on the very edge of the precipice which overlooked the dark, bottomless river whose waters held full many a sad story.

In a moment of time the village was all excitement, and hundreds of men, women, and children rushed to the scene of the accident, headed by Maurice Fairfax who was labouring under great excitement.

"They are round this turn in the road!" he cried, pointing upward to a huge boulder of jutting rocks.

They had passed both of the horses lying dead some few rods below, with parts of the harness still hanging to them. The carriage was broken in a thousand pieces, and lay scattered along the road. But when they reached the spot which Maurice Fairfax had indicated, the body of the silver king was nowhere to be seen.

For a moment he was astounded, and looked in blank amazement about him.

"He was lying right here!" he cried, hoarsely. "I think I can explain it to you," cried one of the miners, coming forward. "If he was near the edge of the precipice, one fierce blast would have caused the body to roll over it."

A piece of cloth, evidently torn from his clothing in falling, hung from a bush some distance down. The old miner pointed to it.

"That settles the matter beyond all doubt," he declared.

Maurice Fairfax crept to the edge of the cliff and looked over it with fascinated eyes.

Some one drew him away.

"Take care or there will be two tragedies instead of one!"

"Who shall break the terrible news to his daughter Pauline?" was the cry that ran from lip to lip.

"There is no need to ask that question," was the reply. "Mr. Fairfax is the only one to undertake that."

He left the crowd standing there speculating as to what the death of the silver king would bring about, and made his way back to Castle Royal.

Out of sight and sound of the people, he gave himself up to his own thoughts.

"I have saved myself at the expense of Wilfrid Stanford's life," he muttered; "and, moreover, I think I have found the way to win Pauline in spite of herself. One more bold move, and the beautiful heiress, despite her wilfulness, will be mine—mine!"

CHAPTER XIV.

ALTHOUGH Maurice Fairfax bore the most important of all messages, he walked leisurely enough over the high, mountainous roads, busy with his own thoughts. He did not quicken his steps until he was in sight of Castle Royal.

To his great relief he saw Mrs. Peters walking in the grounds towards the house. He hurried forward and overtook her.

"Why, you did not remain long in the village?" she said, surprisedly. "You went away so quickly that I did not have a chance to ask you to execute one or two little commissions that I had intended."

She stopped short as she saw his mud-bedraggled clothes.

"Mrs. Peters," he said, in a hoarse voice, "something has happened. How shall I find words to break it to you, who in turn must help me to disclose it to Pauline."

She stopped short and looked at him.

"Something has happened to Mr. Stanford!"

she interrogated.

He nodded.

"The horses have—have—"

She looked the question which her lips could not speak.

"The team ran away—we were both thrown out—I was uninjured—but Mr. Stanford—"

Again he stopped short and looked at her appealingly.

"Tell me the worst!" she cried; "is he dangerously hurt—or—or—"

"He will never know pain in this world again."

"He is dead!" she cried in alarm.

"Yes," he replied.

And with his eyes fixed on the ground, he told her the same story he had told the miners.

It took all her fortitude to bear up under the blow. Together they devised means as to how it should be broken to Pauline. Mrs. Peters suggested sending for the young secretary, but Maurice Fairfax would not hear of this.

"No," he said, in so harsh a tone of voice that the good woman was quite startled. "Too much authority has been vested in him already."

"Then I shall have to tell Pauline myself," she said, slowly.

At that instant they were both startled by a piercing cry.

Neither of them had seen the girl sitting on the other side of the lace-draped window, reading a book.

It had not been her intention to listen as they approached, but the sound of her father's name on Mrs. Peters's lips, and the words which

followed, uttered in such an agitated voice, could not fail to draw her attention.

Like one rooted to the spot, Pauline had heard all.

Then it was that her terrible grief had broken out in a wild and pitiful cry, which brought all the household to the scene in an instant.

For two days Wilfrid Stanford's young daughter hovered between life and death; but her youth and strength asserted themselves, and consciousness drifted back to her and life reasserted itself.

All Pauline's friends crowded about her, striving to bring her what consolation they could.

When Denis Connor met Fairfax at the dinner-table, and heard his recital of the accident, never for a moment did his clear, unflinching blue eyes leave Fairfax's face, as though he were searching down in the very depths of his soul for proof of his words; and that steady gaze annoyed Fairfax more than he cared to own.

He raised his eyes at length, and looked defiantly.

And after that glance which was flashed between them, Denis Connor felt that all was not as Fairfax had represented it to be.

Maurice Fairfax strode out of the dining room and down the long corridor that led to the grounds.

Once or twice he almost fancied that he heard the quick footsteps of the young private secretary following him.

(He clenched his right hand.)

"No one will ever know what happened on that lonely mountain road—of the terrible quarrel which ensued between Wilfrid Stanford, the old silver king, and myself. How I pitched him head foremost from the carriage, and gave the horses a cut to send them flying like mad down the mountain road to wreck the vehicle and give colour to the story that they ran away. I knew, the moment I bent over him, as he was lying by the road-side, that he was dead. I had intended throwing him over the rocks, but I knew it would be useless. I said I would run to the village, and tell them of the runaway, and when they saw his body lying there there would be no one to dispute my story. No one would think or dare accuse me of the crime. I wonder that my amusement did not betray me when I returned to the spot and found him missing. But it certainly must be as they claimed—the explosion of the rocks in the miners' camp in the village beyond shook the very ground beneath him, and caused him to fall over the edge of the precipice down into the dark waters below, where it was useless to attempt to search for his body. Surely Denis Connor has no reason to doubt me."

It was worse than gall and wormwood to Fairfax to think that the secretary still held his position, and that he had no authority to dismiss him.

He had told Mr. Stanford the story of the young secretary's supposed connection with the murder of the miner's daughter to see how he would take it. It was he who had intended to start the story of his supposed crime among the miners; but in view of what had happened since, he concluded it would not be best to do so.

He had been greatly chagrined to learn that there were so many persons who could prove Denis Connor's innocence.

Murice Fairfax knew that he should have taken his leave when the house was plunged in grief, but he braved the promises, and stayed.

The lawyers who had Mr. Stanford's affairs in charge stepped in, taking possession of Castle Royal, and of Pauline, as it were, and retained the young secretary in the same capacity in which he had served, until the estate should be settled. It was during these hours of her darkest sorrow that Pauline learnt to depend upon the young secretary.

He studied her every wish, took from her mind every possible care. There were times when Pauline cried out to herself that he was the greatest comfort of her life. Then came the remembrance that whenever she looked down and saw the ring on his finger, all the love seemed to go out of her heart.

At length Mrs. Peters announced that they would leave Castle Royal for a few months, and

that she would take Pauline to friends in a neighbouring town. Maurice Fairfax had urged this upon Mrs. Peters whenever he found her alone; for he said to himself that that would be the most effectual way of parting her from the young secretary's influence.

Denis Connor's heart grew heavy as he heard these plans discussed. He said to himself that if Pauline passed out of his life in this way, he might never see her again. He grew so sick and troubled over it that it incapacitated him from attending to his duties. His soul yearned to comfort the slender little figure in black.

The joyous laugh had died away from her lips, the merry sparkle from her eyes—even the roses had faded from her cheeks.

She was beautiful as a dream, but with a pathetic loveliness that went straight to one's soul. A new horror had dawned upon the young secretary's mind. Now that Pauline was left alone in the world, her marriage with Maurice Fairfax would in all probability be hastened.

He had done his best to assist them in settling up the old silver king's affairs for Pauline's sake; but now he told himself, they could do without him. In justice to himself, he might as well go now as at any other time.

He wanted to see Pauline alone when he said "good-bye," and for this reason he followed her out of the grounds one morning to her favourite nook under the spreading boughs of a chestnut tree.

The girl sat with her arms folded, a far-away look in her eyes. She did not hear his step until he reached her side.

She sprang to her feet with a little cry. It seemed as if her very thoughts had taken form, and he was embodied in the flesh before her.

"I hope I did not startle you, Miss Pauline," he said, humbly. "You were so absorbed in your thoughts that I almost feared to interrupt them."

What could mean that sudden rush of blood to the pale cheeks? For a moment a mad hope sprang into his heart, only to die out the next instant.

"Will you sit down, Mr. Connor?" said the girl, making room for him on the rustic bench beside her; but he shook his head.

"No," he said; "do not disturb your papers and books. I can just as well stand while I tell you what I have to say. You are going away within the next few days, and I—I have come to say 'good-bye' to you here and now."

She looked up at him in undigested wonder. "I am not going so far away but that you will see me every week," she said. "We are only going to an adjoining city. I heard one of the lawyers tell Mrs. Peters that you would have to be up to consult her about matters every few days."

Denis Connor shook his head dejectedly. "As soon as I can close up the books, I am going to leave Castle Royal for ever," he said.

The girl looked at him with dilated eyes. "You cannot mean it, Mr. Connor!" she gasped. "Why, I—I heard Mrs. Peters say only yesterday that it would be a very hard matter to part with you—you had endeared yourself so much to my poor dear papa and the rest of us."

He looked down in silence, and it was a moment before he spoke.

"I—I should have liked to stay until after the wedding," he said, brokenly; "but urgent duties call me away."

"Wedding! What wedding?" asked Pauline, in surprise; and a great throb of pain shot through her heart that anyone could be thinking of weddings elsewhere when there was so much sorrow at Castle Royal.

"I—I could only be present at your request," he faltered.

Pauline looked at him in surprise. "I—I do not know what you mean, Mr. Connor," she said, with dignity.

"I mean that, if you wished me to stay to witness your marriage with Mr. Fairfax, I would do so; but I would rather not."

"My marriage with Mr. Fairfax!" echoed the girl. "I do not in the least comprehend you. I am not going to be married, and if I were, Mr. Fairfax is the last man in the whole world whom I should select."

Pauline looked at him in surprise. "I—I do not know what you mean, Mr. Connor," she said, with dignity.

"I mean that, if you wished me to stay to witness your marriage with Mr. Fairfax, I would do so; but I would rather not."

"My marriage with Mr. Fairfax!" echoed the girl. "I do not in the least comprehend you. I am not going to be married, and if I were, Mr. Fairfax is the last man in the whole world whom I should select."

Pauline looked at him in surprise. "I—I do not know what you mean, Mr. Connor," she said, with dignity.

"I mean that, if you wished me to stay to witness your marriage with Mr. Fairfax, I would do so; but I would rather not."

Pauline was amazed at the cry that broke from his lips.

"Have I heard aright? Do you mean it?" he cried, in the most intense excitement.

"There can be no better authority than myself on the subject," replied the girl, promptly.

Denis was trembling like an aspen-leaf for one moment, the next he was kneeling before her.

"Is it true?" he cried. "Surely you would not tell me one thing and mean another? I could not bear it, for I love you, Pauline! Heaven help me, that was why I was going away!"

CHAPTER XV.

THAT words were out, in spite of himself, Denis Connor had not intended that Pauline should know the story of his mad, hopeless love; but all unwittingly, in a moment of madness, the truth had burst out. Then he stood before her abashed.

"You will forgive me," he murmured; "most men lose their wits at some time in their lives," he continued. "That is my case now. You are not so very angry with me!"

A beautiful rosy colour flushed her face, and she answered, in a voice so low and sweet that it went a thrill through him.

"No," she said, "I am not angry with you."

"I can hardly hope," he went on, despairingly; "it has only been a dream in my life. You will say that I deserve no pity. In the long, dark

after years that will come to me, I shall like to remember that I defied fate, dared it, braved everything, and told you all. You are a millionaire's betrothed, and I only a private secretary, yet I have been mad enough to dare to love you. Overwhelm me with your scorn, hate me for my daring, yet I glory so much in my love that I would proclaim it to the whole world. I am going away; I shall never appear again before you with my miserable love story. But you will always remember, Miss Pauline, that I never flattered myself with any false hope; I never hoped for a kind word, and I never dreamed of receiving a smile from you. No man in the wide world has ever loved or ever could love you as I do. The greatest, deepest, most passionate love that can ever be given to a human being has been laid at your feet. I shall go from you branded with the fire of a fatal love!"

He bowed his fair, handsome head; his voice died away in passionate murmurs, and he was silent. Suddenly he looked up.

"Are you very angry with me, Pauline, for having told you all?"

To his great surprise, she held out her hand to him. The proud face was all sweetness. Was he mad, or did he see tears in the beautiful dark eyes?

"Do not go away!" she faltered.

He looked at her as if he doubted his senses, and his heart throbbed quickly. He caught the little extended white hand in both of his, and in an instant was bending over it, and kissing it with a passion too deep for words.

"Forgive me—I could not help it," he cried out. "Now I will go away with the memory of this moment in my heart, never to be effaced."

"Why will you go away?" she repeated.

A sob broke from his lips. For one moment his brain reeled.

"You—you need not go," whispered the sweet voice again.

"Do not ask me to stay! It would be too cruel to ask me to live under the same roof with you, now that you know all. I could not be so near, and yet so far from you; you do not understand how it would torture me."

"Have you thought that it might be cruel to me if you went away?"

The lovely face was suffused with blushes; the girl's dark head drooped. How could she say any more to make him understand? For one moment he looked at her; she never forgot the cry of rapturous delight that broke from her lips, or the sudden joyful radiance that overspread his handsome face.

"I dare not believe the evidence of my own

guest in my own house, but I cannot help expressing the desire to read my father's words alone. If you wish to use the library I will take the paper to my room, for every moment seems an age to me."

"You will read it here and in my presence," said Maurice Fairfax, assuming an air of insolent authority that amazed as well as terrified the young lady. "The paper is my property," he went on, harshly; "and after you have familiarised yourself with its contents, I shall trouble you to hand it back to me, as I intend to publish its contents in the newspapers, unless I succeed in making the terms I wish with you."

Pauline drew back and looked at him with dilated eyes. That some kind of a terrible blow was about to fall on her, she felt sure, from the words and manner of the insolent man who stood before her; but what form it would take she did not know. She tried to take the paper from him, but her hands trembled so violently she could not hold it, and it fell at her feet.

Fairfax stooped quickly and recovered it, saying—

"Perhaps I should have offered to acquaint you with its contents, thus saving you the trouble of perusing it until you have grown calmer."

"If you will do so I shall thank you," replied Pauline, wondering vaguely why he was making such a mystery of it.

"I fear you will hate me instead of thanking me for uttering that which must seem distasteful to you."

"Please speak right out without all this preamble, Mr. Fairfax," said Pauline, trembling violently.

"Nothing is so terrible to endure as suspense. I am trying to find words in which to clothe what I must reveal to you," he replied. "To be brief, your father confesses in this bit of paper to the murder of a miner's daughter, which took place three weeks ago, and over which such a mystery has hung ever since."

"It is false!" cried Pauline, with the most piteous cry that ever broke from human lips. "If an angel cried it out, trumpet-tongued, from heaven, I would not believe it!"

"You have his written word for it," returned Fairfax, "and in addition to that, you have my word that I was unfortunately a witness to the crime. Hear me out," he cried, as she recoiled backward and caught the back of an adjacent chair for support. "He was going down to the village to give himself up, even though I did my best to persuade him, for your sake, to hide the terrible truth. At last, but by no means least, let me add, although your father was supposed to be wealthy, he was, in fact, on the verge of bankruptcy. I hold his notes for over £200,000. He was about to take me into partnership. The papers were all filled out, except my name, which was left blank. It was this paper he went down to the village to sign. Before going to the village he wrote you this letter, which concludes with the words: 'Not only to save your fortune, which is in Maurice Fairfax's hands, but to seal his lips from breathing to the world the story of my crime, I ask you to marry him. Even if I were not in his power, he is the one man on earth I should choose to be your husband, Pauline. He is the son of the dearest friend I have in the world. I trust you, I trust my honour, everything in his hands. Do not refuse my last request, Pauline; ay, I make it a prayer to you!'"

The girl listened like one from whom all life had been suddenly stricken. She did not faint, or cry out, or utter any moan. Slowly she held out her hand. Fairfax placed the paper in it, and stood off at arm's-length, watching her as the girl's eyes travelled over it, word after word, line after line.

Not once, but a score of times, the girl read it through, taking no heed of time, until he thought at length that she might lose her reason.

He stepped up to her quietly.

"Pauline," he said, "speak to me. Tell me that this last blow which has fallen upon you has not broken your heart."

She raised her eyes to his face, and to the last day of his life he never forgot the expression in them.

"Do not come near me—do not advance a step!" said the girl, shuddering with awful terror. "If you do I shall surely drop dead."

"Is it 'yes' or 'no,' Pauline?" he asked.

She turned to him like a deer at bay.

"Give me time to think!" she cried. "Give me until I have had an opportunity of weighing the matter in my mind. Let me know upon what I stand. If I refuse you you would publish this terrible story concerning my father to the whole world!"

"Yes," he answered.

"And you would marry me—his daughter—at the price of your silence?"

"You put it very harshly," he said. "I love you, and if you will only marry me no one shall ever know the story of your father's crime."

She held up her hand with a gesture of silence.

"Stop!" she cried. "That is false. You could never make me, or any one who knew my father, believe him capable of such an offence."

"Do you not believe that is your father's writing?" asked Fairfax, and he scarcely breathed, so intense was his excitement as he waited for her reply.

"Heaven help me, it is my father's writing!" moaned the girl.

She did not see the triumph that flashed into the eyes of Fairfax. Once more she started toward the door, her slender body awaying to and fro like a reed in a gale.

He sprang forward to be of assistance to her should she need him, but she waved him back with the imperiousness of a queen.

"Let me take the letter to my room and read it over," she said, in a voice that sounded so unnatural that for a moment he was frightened by it.

"I will trust the letter with you, Pauline," he said. "You would not dare to show it to any one, nor would you dare destroy it."

Ere she could answer him the library began to whirl around her. She threw up her hands with a faint cry, and fell at his feet in merciful unconsciousness.

Thrusting the paper into his breast-pocket Fairfax quickly sprang across the room and gave the bell a sharp ring—a summons which brought one of the servants to the library.

"I just stepped in here after a book," he explained, "and found your young mistress lying here in a swoon."

Mrs. Peters was hurriedly sent for.

"Poor child!" she cried, wringing her hands. "I knew she was keeping up too bravely; now her strength has given out at last."

Tender hands removed Pauline to her room, and the next morning the household was alarmed to learn that the girl was in a high fever.

Jessie Bell and Ethel Hope made all haste to profit by the doctor's warning, to get away from Castle Royal as soon as possible, for the fever which had attacked Pauline was likely to be contagious.

To Mrs. Peter's annoyance, Mr. Fairfax announced his intention of remaining until Miss Pauline would be out of danger.

Denis Connor was greatly chagrined when he heard of Fairfax's intention. His blood boiled. He longed to tell him of his betrothal to beautiful Pauline, but his promise to her that he would keep it a secret until she mentioned it, forbade his doing so. He would have given much to have informed Fairfax that he knew it was a lie which he had told him about being engaged to Pauline. He longed with all his soul to throw him out of the house. Why he should remain there he could not understand. He was to know that all too soon.

Contrary to the doctor's expectation, the fever which he had predicted did not develop, and instead of the long siege of illness which they had anticipated, Pauline, they were assured, would be about in a week's time.

Denis' joy upon receiving this assurance can better be imagined than described.

How should he pass the whole week, and not

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see her! He said to himself that the only way to obtain forgetfulness was to delve as deeply as possible into hard work.

The lawyers who had charge of the millionaire's estate had signified their intention of commencing a thorough overhauling of the books at the beginning of the next month. The young secretary said to himself that he would begin the work by getting together all the books which they might need for the purpose. As he glanced through first one and then another, a look of alarm overspread his fair, handsome face.

"I could almost swear that some one has been tampering with these books!" he muttered.

(To be continued.)

PACETTE.

OLDBOAK: "Doctor, what is the easiest way for me to stop drinking?" Doctor: "The easiest way for you! Why, keep on drinking."

SENTIMENTAL YOUNG LADY: "Ah! Professor, what would this old oak say if it could talk?" "It would say, 'I am an elm.'"

THE HAPPY MAN: "I tell you, old fellow, a man doesn't know what real happiness is until he's married." Cynical Married Friend: "Then he finds it consists in being single."

TEACHER: "Now, define a continent, Miss Green." Miss Green: "A continent is a—a place for people to go to as soon as they're married!"

VICTOR: "Pat says he's descended from some of the greatest houses in Ireland." Mike: "Mush! So he did, many a time—on a ladder!"

HARRY: "Now they speak of her as an up-to-date girl. What do you understand by that?" Tom: "My boy, a girl who is up to date is up to anything."

HUB MA: "Everybody says my daughter got her beauty from me. What do you say to that?" Mrs. Bary: "That it was unkind of her to take it from you."

LAVENDER, who lingered at a seaside resort while his money lasted, being asked, on his return, what the wild waves were saying, replied, "Shell out! Shell out!"

HUSBAND: "Hang it! I've got the rheumatism this morning." Wife: "Oh, you mean that! I wanted to go out to-day, and that's a sure sign of rain."

REPORTER: "That fellow who wanted his name kept out of the paper called in to-day. Oh, he was mad." Editor: "What about?" Reporter: "It seems we kept it out."

"What's the matter with Hoxie! He's acting very strangely." "Nothing serious. He's wearing a straw hat for the first time this season, and trying to appear unconscious of the fact."

It was at the club. Walter (at eleven P.M.): "There is a lady outside who says that her husband promised to be home early to-night." All (rising): "Excuse me for a moment."

MABEL: "You have been wanting some slippers. Here's your chance. A 'gigantic slipper sale' is advertised in the paper." Amy: "You had better get a pair yourself. I don't wear gigantic slippers."

"You seem to have taken quite a fancy to Miss Barnes." "Yes. She's a very strong girl." "Strong! What has that to do with it?" "She's the right kind of a girl to take out on a tandem. I never was fond of work myself."

SIXPENCEMAN (during exciting yacht race): "Man overboard! Shall we stop, or let him drown!" Captain (promptly): "We must stop and pick him up. It's against the rules to drop any ballast during a race."

SELFLOVE: "There's no use talking to Seaborn; he won't listen to reason." Crabtree: "What's the trouble?" Selflove: "I've talked to him for five hours now, and he still believes he's right."

MASTER (to servant recently entered service): "John, go to the station and see what time the train leaves for B—." After an interval of two hours John returns. "The train has just gone, sir; I waited to be sure that it had left."

OLD PARRY: "Why are you crying, my little man?" The Little Man: "Please, sir, I—I—lost m—me ball." "Well, well; don't cry. Here's 6d. to buy another. Now tell me where you lost it!" "Please, sir, too de front winder of your house, sir."

"So Borsaks is going to marry that aged Munn girl, is he?" "Yes, and the funny part of it is that he told her he wanted to marry her on account of her fortune." "Eh!" "He told her she was too young and foolish to have the care of so much money."

"On the whole," said the aged weather prophet, "I have found that the safest course is to predict bad weather." "How so?" asked the neophyte. "Because people are much more ready to forgive you if the prediction does not come true."

He (after discussing the New Woman at some length): "I know you will agree with me on the argument I have just set forth, that a woman should be domesticated. Her place is at home. Now, if you are the girl I take you for—"

She: "Oh, George, this is so sudden."

"Well, little chap," said the stranger in the family, picking up one of the children, "what are you going to be when you're a man?" "Nuffin," said the child. "Nothing! Why so?" asked the stranger. "Because," said the child, "I'm a little girl."

NURSE (confidentially): "Lor', mem, master's getting on; I see his name in the papers." "Indeed, nurse!" cried Mrs. Penstock, pleasantly excited. "What do they say about him?" "Twas in the 'Sunlight Scoreber,' mem. Ah, this was it: 'Mr. Penstock's book ain't worth reading.'"

"SWORTHEN'S article is great," said the editor of the yellow journal, "but you'll have to comb it down a little—the exaggeration is too wild." "Well, what of that!" asked his assistant, in surprise. "Oh, nothing, only some of our advertisers will be hiring him away from us if it runs as it is."

"I ONCE," said the colonel, solemnly, "I once, and only once, had all thirteen trumps dealt me." "Er—I suppose you were the dealer!" suggested the candid friend. "No, sir!" roared the colonel: "no sir; I was not the dealer!" "Then may I ask what happened to the trump which the dealer turned up?" And a terrible silence ensued.

A DISTINGUISHED lawyer, being called to account by his brethren on the Western Circuit for disgracing the profession by taking silver of a client, replied: "I took silver because I could not get gold; but I took every shilling the fellow had in the world, and I hope you don't call that disgracing the profession."

THE two dearest friends were discussing the ball which one of the dearest friends had attended. "The papers this morning speak of me as being among the beauties of the ball," said the one who had attended. "And were you?" asked the other, with interest. "How nice it must have been! Who were the beauties?" "That was the beginning of their estrangement."

IT MIGHT BE WORSE.—"In Austria," she said, "nearly all the barbers are women." He looked up from his paper and shook his head doubtfully. "I wouldn't like it," he said, at last. "It's bad enough to have prize-fight news dinned into your ear when you are helpless, but it would be infinitely worse to have to hear all about the latest fashions."

"WHY won't mamma's little boy tell mamma what he's been stuffing himself with?" anxiously asked the maternal parent, bending over the armchair. "You have been in the pantry, Johnny, eating too much of something you ought not to have eaten at all, and you won't tell me what it is. It makes me sick at heart." "It makes me sick o' tart, too," moaned Johnny, turning his face to the wall. But mamma didn't quite understand.

At Brighton. "Our landlady had to lower the dining-table three inches." "Why did she do that?" "Nearly all the boarders are scorchers."

"TOMMY," said a father to his firstborn, "have you been at those six apples I put in the cupboard?" "Father," said Tommy, looking into his eyes, "I have not touched one." "Then how is it that your mother found five apple cores in your bedroom, and there is only one left on the plate?" "That," said Tommy, as he dashed wildly for the door, "is the one I didn't touch."

An old lawyer in Paris had instructed his client to weep every time he struck the desk with his hand, but forgot and struck the desk at the wrong moment. She promptly fell to sobbing and crying. "What is the matter with you?" asked the judge. "Well, he told me to cry as often as he struck the table." "Gentlemen of the jury," cried the unabashed lawyer, "let me ask you how you can reconcile the idea of crime in connection with such candour and simplicity!"

In a Dublin Police-court a man stood charged with stealing a watch. He stoutly denied the impeachment, and brought a counter-accusation against his prosecutor for assault committed with a frying-pan. The magistrate was inclined to take a common-sense view of the case, and, looking at the prisoner, said: "Why did you allow the prosecutor, who is a smaller man than yourself, to assault you without resistance? Had you nothing in your hand to defend yourself with?" "Bedad, your worship, I had his watch, but what was that against a frying-pan?"

"Is it necessary that you should go to lunch now, Miss Premier?" asked the business man. "I have some important let—" "Yes, it's quite necessary," she said, pinning her hat. He looked at his watch. He frowned. Then he smiled in a winning way and said: "These letters are quite important. Would your friend mind if you missed the regular lunch hour just this time?" "It's not the friend," said she. "Worse than that." "Yes!" "I should say so. The restaurant always runs out of strawberry short-cake by 1.15 o'clock."

An old lady was a spectator of the match between Warwickshire and Lancashire, watching cricket for the first time. She asked her niece who accompanied her, "Why that man behind the wicket stopped the balls that the other man wanted to hit?" Soon after the wicket-keeper caught the batsman, and some of the players shouted: "How's that!" "Out—caught!" was the verdict. "Ah, I am glad they caught him at last!" said the old lady, thinking it was the wicket-keeper that had been dismissed. "The sneak! that makes the ninth time I've seen him stop the ball!"

"How do you like your new typewriter?" inquired the agent. "It's splendid!" was the enthusiastic response. "Well, would you mind giving me a little testimonial to that effect?" "Certainly not; I will do it gladly!" So he rolled up his sleeves, and in an incredibly short time pounded out this: "After Using the automatic Backstomn atype writ, er for thre emonths and Over: I udhesitattngly pronoune it pro no noe it to be all ad even more than the e Manufacturs claim! for it. During the time been in our possession id has more th an paid paid for itself in the Saving of time and labrr!—John Smith." There you are, sir.

"Thanks!" said the agent, dubiously. MADAME PATTI, the popular songstress, was delighting a large audience in the Town-hall at Birmingham, when a working-man at the rear of the building was observed to be in tears. There was nothing in the song to account for this display of grief, for the famed prima-donna was singing in the Italian tongue; but the grief of the man became more pronounced and annoying as Madame Patti had concluded. At length, amid a thunder of applause, the singer retired, and the stranger was asked the reason of his grief. "She reminds me so of my darter," said the tearful one. "She was in the singling-lina." "But surely your daughter could not sing like that!" said a man on the next seat. "No," answered the mourner, with another sob; "but you never could tell what she was singing about."

SOCIETY.

The Tsar and Tsarina are going to Darmstadt for a stay of several weeks, where they will meet the Prince and Princess Henry of Prussia and their children who are expected there in the autumn.

The emblem of royalty of the Queen of Madagascar consists of three scarlet umbrellas, which are held over her Majesty when she sits in her palanquin of state—this latter, a present, oddly enough, from the late Emperor of the French.

The Duchess of Albany and her children, who have not been to Scotland for two years, are much enjoying their stay at Birkhall, the Queen's place in Glen Muik. Princess Alice and the young Duke are particularly fond of the life there and the freedom of it. They will now have the society of the young Prince and Princesses of Battenberg and of Princesses Margaret and Victoria of Connaught.

It is said that Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands is growing up into a Sovereign of the highest intelligence, and with a number of very decided opinions of her own, one of which is likely to be a source of some perturbation to her relatives, although one that does honour to her personally, namely, that she will marry no one for mere reasons of State whom she does not love; and it is understood further that not one of the names of the princes which have already been coupled by rumour with her own, commands itself to the young Queen.

The Prince of Wales will be the guest of Lord Durham at Lambton Castle from Monday, November 22nd, until Friday the 26th, and there will be a series of battues in the preserves on the estate, which are now among the best in the north of England. Lambton Castle, which is within a few miles of Durham, is a very grand old place, with delightful gardens and grounds, and a large and very richly wooded park, which is bordered by the River Wear. Lambton, indeed, is one of the finest seats in the northern counties, although it is a place quite unknown to tourists.

The residence in Stockholm of Prince and Princess Carl of Sweden and Norway, on the return from their honeymoon, will be the so-called "Hereditary Prince's Palace," in the square of Gustavus Adolphus, which for months past has been in the hands of decorators and upholsterers. The grand carved oak staircase is ornamented with bronze statues, and in the ante-chamber are some splendid heavy Norse oak cabinets and chests beautifully carved. The walls are ornamented with antique Saxon porcelain of great value, and some tiger hunting trophies brought from Norway by the Prince. From the grand reception saloon, situated in the centre of the palace, a magnificent panorama is unfolded of the grand historical Square of Gustavus, with its kingly statues and the Strömgård or archipelago in the beautiful stream outside the capital. Through the windows of an adjoining saloon one beholds the huge sombre residence of King Oscar, and the fundamental works for the great new houses of Parliament. In this wing too are situated the cabinet and the boudoir of the young bride, as well as the Royal bedchamber. The dining saloon is to be panelled with oak from floor to ceiling, and the walls are to be ornamented with other of Prince Carl's trophies of the chase from Scandinavia, Germany, India, and other eastern parts.

The Empress Frederica is leading a quiet but busy life at Schloss Cronberg. Surrounded by a few chosen guests, she paints to her heart's content, and has completed some excellent pictures this summer. In the afternoon Her Majesty rides or drives, and the evenings are devoted to music and conversation. The Empress is taking much interest in the restoration of the Lutheran Church at Cronberg, which is the result of her own wish, and to the expenses of which she has largely contributed. Nearly every day she goes to see how it is getting on, and so quickly is the work progressing that the whole building will be finished before the Empress returns to Berlin for the winter season.

STATISTICS.

The British public spends £18,000,000 annually on tobacco.

London has 400,000 houses. Paris has 80,000 houses. New York has 115,000 houses.

The longest recorded hair growing on a female was 8 ft. The longest recorded beard was 12 ft.

In all our wars we have won the splendid average of 82 per cent. of the battles. This is the world's record.

The maximum age assigned to the pine is said to be 700 years; to the red beech, 245; to the oak, 410; and to the ash 145 years.

GEMS.

The highest compact we can make with our fellow is—let there be truth between us two for evermore.

The man who is never tried never knows himself. It is only in the furnace heat that the soul learns its own strength and weakness.

True courage is shown by doing without witnesses that which a man is capable of doing in the face of the world. In the former case, it is certain that ostentation has no share in the effort.

We need not be afraid that we shall go too far in serving others. There is no danger that any of us will ever go too far in the walk of active love. There is no likelihood that any of us will become too bountiful, too kind, too helpful to his neighbour.

LOYALTY to memory which death has sanctified and which you keep most tenderly in your heart of hearts, is no rehearsal or babbling of the name to private, much less to public ears; but it is cherishing a beauty, an innocence, a loveliness or a worth which is as imperishable as God himself, and making these qualities an element and motive of your being.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SPINACH, WITH GOLDEN SAUCE.—Wash and drain a peck of spinach; sprinkle with a tablespoonful of salt; place in kettle without water, and cook twenty-five minutes; drain and put into a saucepan with half a pint of cream and a tablespoonful of butter; cut five hard-boiled eggs in halves; take out the yolks and place the whites over the spinach; set in a place and make the sauce; melt two tablespoonfuls of butter; add the same amount of corn flour; mix smoothly; pour on a pint of boiling water; stir until smooth; take from the fire; season with pepper and the juice of a lemon; lastly, stir in the yolks of the eggs, which must be finely grated, let come to a boil, and pour over the spinach.

OX-TAIL STEWED.—One ox-tail, flour, ketchup, dripping, one onion, carrot, and turnip, pepper and salt; wash the tail well in warm water, and cut it up in joints, the larger joints may be cut in two; dry the pieces well, and mix on a plate a tablespoonful of flour, a teaspoonful of salt, and half a teaspoonful of pepper; rub each piece of tail over with this mixture; put into stew-pan a tablespoonful of dripping, and let it get quite hot; then fry the pieces of tail all round in it, and lift them out when done; pour out the fat that remains, and return the pieces of tail to the pan with the onion-chopped up, two breakfast-cupfuls of water, and the ketchup, and stew gently for an hour and a half; cut the carrot and turnip into very neat pieces, add them, and stew three-quarters of an hour longer; if well and slowly cooked, this is a delightful stew, as the ox-tail contains a great deal of gelatine; dish the meat in the centre of a dish with the vegetables round it.

MISCELLANEOUS.

The largest organ in the world is in the cathedral of Seville, Spain. It has 58 pipes, and 110 stops.

In China a man may wear the same garments for a lifetime without being out of style, so little does the fashion change.

In Tropical forests so large a proportion of the plants are of a sensitive variety that sometimes the path of a traveller may be traced by the withered foliage.

A MAN has invented what he calls an "aquatic glove," which is intended to be worn in swimming. The fingers of the glove are connected by a web, like the toes of a duck.

A BICYCLE bell has been invented which may be fastened to the pedal. A side turn of the foot presses a lever, which engages the clapper on the crank, and rings the bell.

OFFA'S DYKE was a defensive wall built by the Romans against the Welsh. It was an earthen fortification, 113 miles long, and entirely cut off Wales from England.

LOCUSTS are an article of food in parts of Africa, Arabia, and Persia—of such importance that the price of provisions is influenced by the quantity of the dried insects in hand.

The tooth of a mastodon in an almost complete state of preservation has been recently unearthed. It weighed 14 lbs. 12 ozs., and measured 10 inches by 6, and is pure ivory.

The elephant is commonly supposed to be a slow, clumsy fellow, but when excited or frightened can attain a speed of twenty miles an hour, and can keep it up for half a day.

In spite of the closest espionage, the diamond mining companies of South Africa have stolen from them during the year £1,000,000, of which they recover about one-half.

BOATS are now being made in some quarters out of pumice-stone. This is a strong material of great lightness, and a boat made thereof will support a considerable load, even when full of water.

The oldest sailing craft in the world is the so-called Gokstad ship, a Viking vessel, which was discovered in a sepulchral mound on the shores of Christiania fiord. It is a thousand years old.

ONE reason for the beauty of Japanese sewing, fancy work, and embroidery, is that it is all done by professionals. Women have little use for needles, and spend their leisure time in gardening.

SMYRNA is the only one of the great cities on the west coast of Asia Minor which has survived from ancient times and still retains its importance as a great emporium of trade between Europe and Asia.

A REMARKABLE eel has been discovered in the Fiji Islands. It has a peculiar formation in its throat, which causes it to whistle when in an excited state. The eel is fifteen feet long and several inches in girth.

BARRE ISLAND is famous throughout the Canadian maritime provinces for its race of wild ponies. They were originally placed there in order that they might furnish food for sailors shipwrecked there frequently.

ON the State railways in Germany the carriages are painted according to the colours of the tickets of their respective classes. First class carriages are painted yellow, second class green, and third class white.

PARIS and Marseilles are now connected by telegraph lines entirely under ground. They are placed in iron pipes, and buried four feet beneath the surface, with manholes three thousand feet apart.

COURTESY is one of the first lessons taught to the children of China. Almost every Chinese child, rich or poor, is taught how to address his parents, his superiors, his fellows, and his inferiors. Except among the very poorer classes, a considerable portion of each day is devoted by the child to study of etiquette.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MAR.—Why not try with less milk and butter?

FLORA.—We should advise you to wear none at all.

FORMER.—Put in slowly, drop by drop, not all the time.

ONE IN TROUBLE.—You had better take a solicitor's advice.

C. S.—The Chestnutfield spire, we believe, was built crooked.

TOMMY'S SWEETHEART.—The brother has no claim to the property.

QUEEN.—Any bookeller will furnish you with any book you may want.

WIDOWED WIFE.—You cannot obtain a divorce without the aid of a lawyer.

VINE.—Write to the Civil Service Commissioners, Cannon-row, Westminster.

DACIA.—The sentence is not strictly grammatical without the inserted word.

ANXIOUS WIFE.—The assumption of a false name does not invalidate the marriage.

H. Y.—You had better consult a lawyer before acting on the notice you have received.

FLORA.—Among flowers, the chrysanthemum is said to live the longest after being cut.

MANX CAY.—Castletown is the ancient, and Douglas the modern capital of the Isle of Man.

B. D. G.—You can read the will and obtain a copy at Somerset House, upon paying the fees.

TURKISH DOVE.—It is very bad form to be always quarrelling and talking about your quarrels.

LADY BETTY.—A woman is of age at twenty-one, and until then she is legally under parental control.

DOUBTFUL.—The only safe way is to show it to some expert, who will at once decide upon its value.

PARENTS.—You cannot be compelled to serve your master after you become twenty-one years old.

CHATTERBOX.—It is usually better not to take any notice of things when they are told to us in this kind of way.

STUDENT.—Our own sense should teach us when it is unwise or dishonourable to repeat anything which is said.

AMBITIOUS.—A domestic servant is not entitled to leave without notice by paying her employer a month's wages.

ROSEMARY.—Flour should be sifted over the cake and then wiped off with a soft cloth before applying the icing.

YOUNG MARRIAGE.—Usually the wedding-ring is gold and plain; but there is no legal obligation that it should be so.

LOWKEY MOTHER.—Apply or write to the War Office, London, giving the same particulars to them as you have given to us.

LOTUS.—It is the name of several species of water-lily. The lotus of classic fame is a shrub of Northern Africa and Southern Europe.

CRACKER.—It is a very dangerous permit, and serious accidents frequently happen even to those well acquainted with the business.

GERALD.—A sharp pointed, rather hard lead pencil is a better implement to use; it shows you where you are going without leaving too hard upon it.

O. G.—A master or mistress is not under legal obligation to give a servant on dismissal any character at all, or to give any reason for refusing to do so.

DAILY.—We should advise your scouring it off first with silver sand-water, using a block of sandstone to rub with; glue and pipe clay will not do much for you.

IN NEED OF ADVICE.—Wait awhile. Marrying in haste is repenting at leisure, and it is not worth while to risk spoiling an entire lifetime by too much precipitancy.

OLD MAN.—It darkens from youth upward until after maturity, and when the hill of life is turned it begins to lose its colour, and changes to gray and thence to white.

R. F. P.—The essential oils of many flowers are so fugitive that it has been impossible to secure them by any ordinary process. This has made them very high in price.

A. M. H.—If her first husband made false appearances, or proved to be alive when the second marriage was contracted, the children by the second husband would be illegitimate.

BEHIND.—Cut the potatoes into wedge-shaped pieces, and fry them partly. Put aside for some hours, and fry a second time. This causes the potato to puff out in a peculiar manner.

AMATEUR NURSE.—The furniture must suitably for sick-room is that which is least liable to hold the dust or bad smells, and this will point to the employment of plain wooden chairs.

WOULD-BE STEWARDESS.—The duties of a stewardess on board a passenger ship are to attend exclusively to the wants of the lady passengers, and, as well, to make herself generally useful in her department.

IN NEED OF ADVICE.—We should prefer that you should apply to Emigrants' Information Office, 31, Broadway, London, E.W., for accurate guidance regarding your intended removal to British Columbia.

REALISE.—When a young lady breaks off a marriage engagement, and sends to her lover for all her letters and the presents she has given him, she should be willing to return his letters and the presents he has made to her, including the engagement-ring.

BAD HABIT.—It is a shocking and distressingly bad habit that of biting the nails. It is disgusting to one's friends, ruins the finger tips, and destroys the whole appearance of the hand. Surely you have got will power enough to stop it.

ETIQUETTE.—Good sense is the only guide in these matters, remembering that in your own house, when you are acting the part of a host, it is one of the duties of hospitality to give every guest a friendly reception, and consequently to shake him by the hand.

FEARLESS HUSBAND.—It is quite possible for a young man to work his way to any part of the world. It requires a certain amount of grit and determination to do this, however. One has to apply for work and receive many rebuffs before getting it.

TORST.—Boil three or four onions in a pint of water, then with a gliding brush paint over the frames of the pictures and chimney glasses, and you may rest assured that the flies will not alight on the article washed with the solution. This does no injury to the frames.

R. M.—The Queen has no surname, the Queen's family or line stands by itself in this country; there is no other with which it could be confounded, consequently she needs no surname for her identification; she is Alexandra Victoria, nothing more.

GRAVE FLOWERS.

Alit the long night we lay
Upon her bosom, so
White maiden—was her heart of ice
That she has breast of snow?

We lifted up our heads
And looked at her. Alas!
No maid! This is another flower,
Our sister of the grass!

Oh, have they suffered too much rain,
Or too much dew to drown
The eyes beneath those heavy lids,
Wax petals, folded down.

Or, cruel, have they let the sun
Kiss with too fierce a ray,
That she has bowed her fragile head
So early in her May?

We for the rose-thorn! We
The perfume of the breath!
She is too beautiful to grace
The twilight fields of death!

MR. MAIDEN.—Closely set long bristles are very liable to assist in soiling the hair. They are apt to split at the ends and catch the air as it passes through them and break it off. Watch your hair brushes closely, and when a split bristle is found it should be removed at once.

PETERED.—Moths may be kept away from furs and other things to which they take a fancy by several pungent or strong-smelling substances. Cedar pencil wood shavings are good for this purpose; so is camphor; so is cayenne pepper; common pepper also has been recommended.

G. S. T.—One pound mace, two slices bread, pepper, and salt. Grate the bread roughly and soak it in a little water; squeeze it out and mix with a little pepper and salt. Roll this mixture into small balls, put on a dish, and cook in the oven for about half-an-hour. They may be dressed with a border of mashed potatoes.

QUINQUENARY.—An exceedingly nice salad dressing may be made by substituting two large salad spoonfuls of perfectly sweet cream for the oil. The cream must be of the richest quality, known as double cream, and should be perfectly fresh. Use it in the same way in which the oil is used.

AMATEUR GARDENER.—The colours of flowers may be changed by certain additions to the soil they grow in. Charcoal powder deepens and intensifies the flowers of the dahlias, the roses, peonies, &c.; carbonate of soda reddens carnations, hyacinths, and superphosphate of soda alters in various ways the hue or bloom of other cultivated plants.

MAYBLOSSOM.—Dress the stained part and apply oil to it to soften the tar; then rub in soap and leave it as for a few minutes, after which wash it out alternately with oil of turpentine and warm water. If this does not succeed you may try a mixture of the raw yolk of egg with turpentine, apply it, and allow it to dry on the stain; then scratch it away and wash out with warm water.

LAMIE.—Remove carefully all the strings; cut the beans into one-quarter inch pieces, laying a number together, and cutting a small slit in each one; or cut each bean lengthwise into four strips, and lay them evenly together. Place them in salted boiling water, and boil uncovered until tender; drain off the water and season with salt, pepper, and butter, as suit will do them just enough while sauce is cooking well.

ICE CREAM.—Take four breakfast cups of milk, two tablespoonfuls corn flour, two pound sugar, one teaspoonful essence of vanilla; beat the milk and add it to the corn flour wet with a little cold milk; let it boil, then stir in the sugar and vanilla, and set it aside to get quite cold, then freeze it. Any other flavour may be added instead of vanilla; lemon or strawberry, or a tablespoonful of chocolate may be added with the corn flour, and is good for a change. The cream may be made with skim milk, and an egg put in well beaten up after it has boiled; that makes it a little yellow.

STUDYING.—It is not wise to take a hearty breakfast and then sit down and study; the nerve force required for the digestion of food weakens the vitality of the mental powers for the time; or if the result runs the other way, then indigestion is set up through the concentration of nerve force in the brain by application to the studies in hand; the better way assuredly is to take light meals at shorter intervals while the study is proceeding, and at the close of the day, when books are laid aside, to have a liberal allowance of food, and relax by engaging in something that does not tax the mind.

NETTLE.—Have lettuce, watercress, hestroot, radish, onion, shallot, chives; tablespoonful salad oil, sauce of cream, dessertspoonful vinegar, teaspoonful fine sugar, half teaspoonful mustard, two salt-spoonfuls salt, and one salt-spoonful pepper; wash vegetables nicely, not to be in water, wipe green over with soft towel; shred all up in small pieces; put into small basin the sugar, mustard, salt, pepper, and mix; add vinegar; pour this over the salad, then sprinkle the oil, and lastly the cream; stir up when to be used and mix; radishes, cut in thin slices, may be sprinkled all over salad at the last.

A. N. B.—Morning and evening with the stick end of a lucifer match dipped in nitric acid; just touch the top of it; be careful not to allow the acid to get on the surrounding flesh, as it burns, and use the same caution not to let it drop on carpet, or clothes, &c.; it will be destructive to whatever it touches. Allow the acid to dry well after you have put it on the warts before you use your hands; continue to apply morning and evening until it smartly, then stop it for a day or two, when the warts will probably loosen and fall off; if not, use the acid as before till the smarting commences.

STOMACH.—Pull up the moment you feel you are going to stagger, and allow the muscles of throat to relax, so that your tongue may fall free from your teeth; it may be necessary to make the first shape of an effort to whistle, in order to bring the tongue and lips under command; all this can be done in an instant at any time, and the moment you feel you have yourself in hand, again you will begin to say what you intended; in fact, half the cure is got by learning to pause when the stammer is coming; then much is gained by practising the lower notes of the voice, speaking out of the chest as it were; begin on this plan.

MOTHER OF THREE.—Boil some bones, or a shank of veal or mutton, or a bit of beef about three quarters of one pound, in ten breakfast cups of water for a few hours, having in it a bit of carrot, turnip and onion; then strain this stock; when the soup is to be made, take a stoppan and put in a dessertspoonful of butter or dripping; let it get hot, then chop an onion and fry it in it, then add one breakfast cup of tinned tomatoes, or three-quarters pound of fresh ones; cut all up and stew with the onion and butter in the pan for a quarter of an hour; put it all through the strainer, keeping only the seeds back; now put this in among the stock, and put it on the fire to boil; mix two tablespoonfuls of flour, and one cup of milk; stir this in and salt and pepper, and stir till it boils five minutes, and it will be ready and good soup.

ROSE.—Take a quantity of bloom of fragrant flowers, such as roses, jasmine, and others of the same season, with a small quantity of sweet brier and myrtle, having more rosebloom than of the other flowers of course; spread the petals on a layer of cotton dipped in Florence or finest olive oil, sprinkle over them a small quantity of finely powdered salt; place another layer of cotton and flowers on that, then another and another, until the bowl or bottle in which they are laid is full; next tie a bladder over the mouth of the vessel, place it in the sun in a garden or window forcing case if possible; to about a fortnight remove the bladder and squeeze the mass, when a fragrant oil or ester of roses will be obtained; put it into a bottle and tie the bladder over it once, as the odour evaporates rapidly if the bottle is left uncorked, or merely closed with cork without the bladder.

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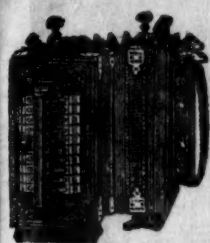
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